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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE

Published monthly at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1922.

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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE

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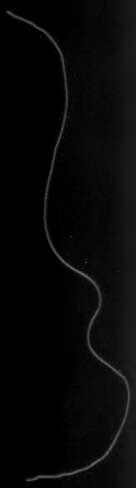

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

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AT THE CROSSWAYS OF THE GAME PATHS.

BY F. L. FARRER.

I.

In East Africa, "shamba," Swahili for farm, is a word which has various shades of meaning. It may be the more or less finished article of some years' standing, where orderly rows of coffee, or sisal, or maize testify to the white man's success in grappling with nature, and incidentally fill his pockets with well-earned gains; it may be the cultivated patch in the native reserve, which, principally tilled by his women-folk, supplies its lord and master with the necessaries of life, and renders him averse to strenuous endeavour, now that the pax Britannica has foreclosed the internecine warfare which once upon a time he regarded as his, the male's, principal business; or it may be a surveyed area of land "in the blue," so to speak, which, having been recently acquired by some enterprising settler, is in process of development—*i.e.*, clearing of scrub, ploughing, and planting—a potential shamba in fact. It was on such a one I lived for some nine months prior to the war. Not having such a possession myself, I gladly accepted the offer of a friend to go and live on his property, and start the work of development during his enforced absence.

This particular shamba, then, consisting of some 5000 acres, although not really far removed from civilisation as represented by more or less developed farms to the west and north, was at the time I am speaking of an outpost, in that to the east for many miles there was no human habitation, save perhaps that of some wandering Wandorobo,

a gipsy-like hunting tribe who move hither and thither in pursuit of game, the as yet unchallenged owners being lion, buffalo, rhinoceros and leopard, and other less important residents; while direct communication with the south was effectively barred by the two rivers Thika and Athi, which here run parallel for some ten miles. A range of hills running roughly north and south formed at that time, as far as settlement was concerned, the eastern boundary of this particular district, and on the southernmost end of these hills was my place of residence. From the shooting point of view this ground had been very little disturbed. Occasional shooting safaris would pass through it, but they would be hurrying on further afield to the country about the junction of the Tana and Thika rivers.

One hot morning in January —in the Equator January and February are the two hottest months of the year—I found myself riding at the base of the hills along a native path, one of the trade routes between the Wakikuyu and Wakamba tribes, making for a dark patch of woodland which marked the termination of the hill range. Zebra and congoni (Coke's hartebeest) paused in their grazing to survey me with obvious curiosity. The zebra, after a prolonged stare, moved slowly away, but the congonis' interest was more maintained. As I approached closer, they gave vent to their alarm signal —half-sneeze, half-cough, with a strong note of disdain—whisked round on their quarters, and went off at their curious lurching gallop. Having retired some 300 yards, they again turned about and scrutinised me. Then, having apparently come to the decision that on that day at any rate I was not out for blood, they closed in and followed me at a respectful distance. About a mile from the house, the thatched roof of which could be seen on a ridge running out from the hillside, a cart track left the main path and the open plain and struck off avenue-like into the thicker bush at the base of the hills. Some fine makuyu (wild figtrees), mimosa thorn, smaller scrub, and a dense growth of grass some five feet high testified to a richer belt of soil, where for centuries the earth had been washed down the steep hillsides by the heavy rains. Following this track I eventually arrived at my destination.

The house itself — a wattle and daub structure with a thatched roof — was, to put it mildly, unpretentious, but wholly in keeping with the elemental nature of its surroundings, as were also two tame young ostriches who were strolling unconcernedly about the entrance. It was built, as I have said, on a sort of spur running out from the hillside, and commanded a magnificent view of the surrounding country. To the south in the immediate foreground one looked down to the river Thika, and over

and beyond that to a darker line of vegetation marking the river Athi, the two rivers, curiously enough, coming to a point within three miles of each other, and then flowing on side by side for some ten miles or more before finally parting, the Thika turning northwards to join the mighty Tana, and the Athi passing off to the south-east. Beyond the Athi loomed up the great solitary thickly-wooded hill Doingo Sapuk or Kilima Inbogo, the hill of the buffalo; to the east one looked over many miles of bush country, a famous resort of game of all descriptions, and a favourite hunting-ground of shooting safaris. To the west a hazy blue line marked the Aberdare mountains.

Behind the house the grassy hillside rose steeply; in front, on a plateau of the spur on which the house was situated, a small space had been cleared in the surrounding sea of long grass and scrub. Beyond this a dark thicket, chiefly composed of mimosa thorn, grew in a semicircle on the hill-slopes. To the left of this small oasis a donga, overgrown with a mass of bush and tangled grass, led down in the direction of the river. Close to the house a rhino path went off round the shoulder of the hills, which here ended abruptly, to the *terra incognita* at the back. Exploring the country later, I found that this path was one of the main arteries used by the game residing in the back blocks—*i.e.*, lion, rhinoceros, and buffalo. Following the hill range along its slopes, it was joined by subsidiary paths which passed across a densely-bushed valley to a further range of hills to the east. It was the route usually taken by those of my above-mentioned neighbours who wished to pass from back to front of the range of hills. It was the shortest and most convenient approach to the river, and as there was no permanent water in this valley, there was during the dry season a considerable amount of coming and going. From the vicinity of the house a network of game paths led off in different directions on my side of the hills. One in a series of rough steps ascended the hill at the back of the house and led on to the summit of the range; another, as I have said, led down the donga to the river; a third followed along the base of the hills on their western side; and yet another passed down to the open flats between the hills and the river.

The place in its isolation and stillness seemed to be instinct with the very spirit of the wilds. That dark belt of wood almost threatening the house might well be the noontide resting-place of some crusty-tempered bull buffalo; indeed, later on I found old slots which, judging from their size, belonged to some solitary bull excommunicated from the herd. At any moment a rhino travelling on his lawful occasions might come round the shoulder of the hills, a surmise which turned out to be

fully justified, as will appear later. The donga, tunnelling under dense bush and tangled grass, seemed to offer a convenient line of approach for the larger cats, should they take it into their heads to investigate the doings of one whom they could not fail to regard as an interloper. My reflections at this point were interrupted by a shrill whistle, which seemed to come from the hillside at the back of the house. It was exactly the sort of whistle a London errand-boy makes to attract the attention and waste the time of some kindred spirit of his calling. Looking up the hill, at first I could see nothing. Again the whistle was repeated; this time there was a distinctly interrogative note about it, and the quick movement made by the stamp of a foot arrested my eye and betrayed the presence of two reedbuck, their stony-grey colouring blending with that of the scattered rocks and dried-up grass on the hillside. They had come half-way down the hill to see what was happening below. For some minutes they stood there at gaze, and then, having apparently satisfied their curiosity, they retired up the rocky pathway in a succession of bounds. During my sojourn at the Crossways these two little fellows were constant visitors, scarcely a week passing without a call from them. Natives imitate the calls of wild animals to perfection, and the bullock-boys, whose huts were close to the bullock boma alongside the houses, used to whistle back at them. I have heard the tahr, a mountain-goat of the Himalayas, make an exactly similar whistle.

I have referred above to the intense stillness of the place, but this was only noticeable in the heat of the day, when my neighbours were in the habit of taking their noontide siesta. At other times of the day, and more particularly at night, there was plenty of vocal entertainment. Many songsters in the thicket would welcome the dawn, at first with subdued twitterings, and then, as the crimson orb of the sun appeared ushering in another day, with a full chorus of song. In the heat of the day the silence would be broken every now and again by the deep bell-like very musical note of the chime bird, a species of crow. Then sometimes one would hear another weird bird-call exactly like a small child crying. The author of this I was never able to identify. Towards evening, at 5 P.M. or thereabouts, my lady partridge, or, to be more exact, her first cousin the francolin, would start calling to her mate, and from the river would come the harsh cry of the guinea-fowl as they selected their roosting-place for the night. Then as darkness closed in one would perhaps hear the barking of a zebra—a sound more canine than equine—warning his companions of some prowling lion; and later the demoniacal laughter of hyæna, and the peculiar grating noise, like a saw rasping

on wood, which a leopard sometimes makes. Frequently, whilst smoking the after-dinner pipe between 8 and 9 P.M. before turning in for the night, I would hear the grunting of a lion as he passed down the donga close to the house on his way to the river. Then for an hour or two one would hear the grunting at intervals, growing fainter and fainter in the distance, as he proceeded on his hunting rounds; and suddenly the thunder of hoof-beats on the plain as the hunted zebra stampeded. Sometimes he would return by the donga, and stay there for a time grunting. The boma in which the oxen were enclosed for the night was close to the house, and at first I thought they were responsible for attracting him so frequently to my neighbourhood, and nightly expected an attack. He, however, though constantly passing within 100 yards of the house, never made a raid on the bullocks—the reason being, I suppose, that zebra and congoni were numerous, and satisfied his requirements.

II.

My activities were concerned with a very small portion of the 5000 acres—*i.e.*, the clearing of the heavy timber on the hill slopes below the house, and subsequently the breaking of the cleared area with the plough. This belt of woodland, owing to the extreme depth and richness of the soil, was the site selected for the planting out of young coffee-trees. The original residents therefore remained for the most part undisturbed, though, as the nearest butcher's shop was forty-five miles away, I had, of course, to shoot meat for the larder. For my meat supply I drew principally on the congoni, for several reasons. In the first place, they were the game most easily obtainable, which was an advantage, as when one is alone one cannot afford to absent oneself too long from the sphere of action. Work on the farm is apt to come to an abrupt termination as the bwana disappears in the offing with his rifle. There is a Swahili proverb which says, "When the cat is away, the mouse is king," and on such an occasion the farm boys are not slow in giving full effect to it. Tobacco is produced, and the time wiled away pleasantly enough in the discussion of local politics, the interchange of spicey stories, and that ever-popular topic, the shortcomings of the white man in general and their own master in particular, until such time as one of their number doing sentry-go gives the native equivalent for the schoolboy's "cave" on the reappearance of their employer. Then, again, the congoni, with the exception perhaps of zebra, are by far the most numerous of any species of game in East Africa,

and therefore least in danger of being exterminated. Lastly, their hides are tough, and make serviceable reins, for which there is a constant demand by the bullock boys.

As regards the farm boys, I had at one time and another gangs of Kikuyu, Meru, and Embu working on the shamba. Shortly after my arrival a party of ten of the most primitive people came to proffer their services. They had never worked on a farm before, and had been reconnoitring several in the neighbourhood, from which, so I gathered, they had withheld their patronage on the score of over-civilisation. They had been attracted hither owing to the uncivilised appearance of my domain, which no doubt bore some resemblance to their own wild haunts somewhere on the northern slopes of Kenia. They were an offshoot of the Meru living north of that tribe. After some palaver, carried on chiefly by gesticulation —they spoke some gibberish-like dialect of their own—they agreed to work for a month at the usual rate, five rupees per month and their food. This business settled, I was giving instructions to my headman as to their accommodation, when the mnyopara of the Kikuyu, who had been an interested spectator of our negotiations, asked if he might have a word with me. He wished to request that these new arrivals might have their domiciles as far removed as possible from those of his own people. I inquired his reasons, and he replied that my new recruits were entirely uncivilised. "Nyama" (animals), he said; "they live in holes in the ground; they don't even build houses"—to wit, grass huts. There are, it would appear, well-defined social distinctions even in the wilds of Africa! Coming from a forest part of the country, my primitives proved most excellent axe-men, and being entirely devoid of any taint of trades unionism, they delighted in giving me exhibitions of their prowess. They rather showed up the Kikuyu, until a spirit of competition induced the latter to infuse more energy into their work. As may be imagined, I never missed an opportunity of fostering this excellent spirit, and trees began to fall with gratifying rapidity.

Occasionally when wearied by the monotony of congoni diet I would shoot a reedbuck, being, however, careful to go far enough afield to avoid any chance of shooting my two little friends on the hillside. Reedbuck afford very pretty shooting, as the hilly country they affect lends itself to stalking, which in the open plains is often impossible, not only because of the nature of the ground, but also owing to the number of its occupants. A reedbuck, too, presents a small target, and requires accurate shooting. In their habits, and in a lesser degree in their appearance, they reminded me of the Himalayan gural. The reedbuck's horns, however, curve forward at the tips, whilst the gural's curve

backwards. In the thickly-wooded ravines on the hillsides were the bushbuck, a forest-loving animal, which seldom strays far from cover. The evening was the time to look for them. Then they would steal out with their curious crouching gait, and feed on the fringe of their woodlands. When brought to bay the bucks can give a very good account of themselves. On one occasion I had wounded one, and was following up the blood trail through thick undergrowth. The Meru boy who was with me, in his anxiety to get meat, had pressed forward in front of me. Shortly afterwards I heard him yelling. The bushbuck had dashed out of some thick undergrowth and inflicted a wound on his thigh. Luckily the horns had passed one on each side of that part of his anatomy, and he was more frightened than seriously damaged. As he came out to the attack I heard the buck emit a sharp barking noise, very similar to that of the Indian karkur or barking-deer.

On the flats between the hills and the river were to be found the zebra and congoni and giraffe. All these preferred the open ground free of thick bush; but sometimes, when the grass on the plains was dried up, the congoni would wander up the wooded hillsides, where, owing to the shade, there was a fresher growth of grass. As a rule they preferred to be in the open. Zebra, like the congoni, favoured open ground, but unlike the latter, they would come quite close to the house to graze. Before the heavy rains had broken I had taken the precaution of making a fire-belt round the house by burning a considerable area of dry grass. When the rains came a crop of sweet young grass sprang up, to which the zebra were very partial. On coming out of the house at dawn one morning I saw a party of them with three giraffe feeding within 200 yards; the latter, being royal game, were not allowed to be shot, and were exceedingly tame. On several occasions I have walked up to within forty yards of them. Talking of the tameness of unmolested wild animals, I must record an experience I had with oryx, in what was then German East Africa. I was out with a patrol in the early days of the war just across the frontier looking for Hun big game. We had dismounted at the foot of a ridge to rest our horses, and I walked up the slope to have a look at the surrounding country through my glasses. Half-way up the slope a solitary bull oryx, with a very fine pair of horns, was grazing. Of all the antelope, an oryx is perhaps the hardest to approach in any district where they have come in contact with human beings. I walked steadily on to within twenty yards of him before he took any notice of me. I thought at first he must be blind, though his splendid condition

gave the lie to such a supposition. It was unlikely, too, that in a country swarming with lions he should have survived if he had been blind. As I came to a halt at twenty paces, he looked up and surveyed me for a few seconds, and then resumed his grazing. I then advanced to within ten paces of him, when he stared at me again, and then, without any show of alarm, very deliberately *walked* away. I am convinced that he had never seen a human being. Still one would have supposed that some instinct would have prompted him not to allow the close approach of any living creature with which he was unfamiliar.

To return to my neighbours on the shamba. Keeping closer to the river, and favouring the denser bush to be found thereby, were the impala, who seldom came into the open or strayed far from water. For exquisite beauty of form and supreme grace of movement, they of all the African antelope must, I think, be awarded the palm. They are, in fact, living exponents of the "poetry of motion." I was extremely anxious to get a photograph of them in their natural surroundings. Having examined the ground in the vicinity of one of their favourite haunts—they were very local in their habits, and were generally to be found in the same area—I discovered a sort of peninsula formed by a tongue of land running out between the river and one of its backwaters. As the impala might be expected to have an accurate knowledge of their own terrain, I thought it unlikely that I should be able to manœuvre them into such a cul-de-sac. However, I decided it was worth trying. Accordingly one day, with the help of two native boys, by dint of moving very slowly, we managed gradually to head the herd, consisting of two buck and twenty does, in the required direction. Finally, I had them at the end of the spit of land which grew narrower as it approached the river. Scattered bushes rather interfered with a clear view, and I was dodging about trying to get a favourable position to snap-shot them, when, having realised the trap into which they had been manœuvred, they suddenly made up their minds to run the gauntlet of my presence and break back. They came dashing past me in all directions, making the most astonishing leaps. Seemingly light as air and graceful beyond all description, this wonderful *corps du ballet* of the wilds seemed hardly to touch the ground in their meteoric progress.

The waterbuck were similar to the latter in their tastes. There was a belt of thickly-growing mimosa thorn alongside the river of which they were particularly fond. A full-grown waterbuck is a very noble-looking animal, and though an antelope, is distinctly stag-like in appearance. Standing in this sylvan glade

with three or four of his does around him, the sunlight filtering through the shade of the mimosas, they presented a fascinating picture of animal life. A friend of mine had four couple of English harriers with which he used to hunt jackal, duiker, and steinbuck. On one occasion we tried them with waterbuck. The difficulty was to get the waterbuck to leave the river, where the bush is always thickest, and face the open. Hounds, however, stuck well to his line, and finding they were not to be shaken off, he finally made for the more open country. Scent was so good—waterbuck have a peculiarly strong scent—that hounds somewhat outdistanced the field, but when we came up with them they were baying him in a water-hole where he had soiled. With his back to a tree overhanging the pool, he stood up to his middle in water, and hounds were leaping all round him.

III.

In the river, and only venturing out at night to feed along the banks, were the hippopotamus. Their spoor, to be distinguished from that of the rhino by the fact that they have four toes to the latter's three, was to be found all along the riverside. Much-used pathways tunnelling under the thick bush bore evidence of their nightly wanderings. They were to be seen sometimes in the river in the daytime, their eyes and nostrils just visible above the surface of the water as they came up to breathe. In this district they were perfectly harmless, but if in their perambulations at night they happen to come across some coffee-tree nursery or vegetable garden, which for convenience in watering are often placed close to the river—well, the garden won't look very nice the next morning. A neighbour of mine living higher up the river showed me with much pride a charming little garden and coffee nursery he had made along its banks. There were strawberries and bananas and a pleasing variety of vegetables. The next time I visited him, I naturally inquired after the welfare of the garden, whereupon he became almost inarticulate. I accompanied him to inspect. A family party of hippo had been enjoying a moonlight picnic there the night before, and there wasn't much of the garden left!

Crocodiles would lie in the shallow reed-covered inlets of the river waiting for the smaller antelope, such as steinbuck and duiker, to come down and drink. Strolling by the riverside one day with a friend, Jack, a black lurcher with a remarkably good nose, who was my constant companion and a keen investigator of animal and bird life on the estate, started bark-

ing vigorously some little way ahead of us. We heard a rustling in the reeds, and rushing up we were just in time to fire a broadside into a "croc" who was making frantic efforts to regain the river. We had the curiosity to cut him up, and found nothing but a handful of pebbles in his stomach. He had evidently not been having much luck lately.

I have good reason to remember another riverside rencontre. A friend and myself were one day walking along a game-path by the riverside, looking for some guinea-fowl which we had heard calling. I was looking up trying to pick out their whereabouts in some trees just ahead of us when my companion seized me by the belt from behind and jerked me backwards. A few paces in front, poised motionless over the game-path we were following, was an enormous python. His head and some three feet of his length projected from the centre of a bush, the remainder of his sinuous bulk being partly coiled round the bush and partly concealed in the long grass at its foot. So absolutely motionless was he, and so perfectly did his mottled colouring blend with his surroundings, that at a casual glance he might almost have been mistaken for a dead leafless branch. We emptied both barrels of our guns, loaded with No. 5's, into him, but he made good his escape. One had a fleeting glimpse of coil after coil, the thickness of a man's thigh, disappearing in the long grass. He too, like the crocodile, was obviously waiting for some of the smaller antelope to pass along the game-path on their way to drink at the river.

Of my more formidable neighbours in the back blocks, buffalo mostly kept to the valley behind the hills. When the rains brought the young grasses up and filled the dried-up water-courses, one would see wide roadways of trampled-down grass, where the herd had passed in one of its periodical migrations for change of pastures at the head of the valley. Before taking up my residence on the hills, I once saw a herd of more than fifty of them feeding on a grassy hill-slope not two miles from the house.

A large and portly neighbour whom I did not as a rule meet unless I went to the back blocks to look for him, was Squire Rhino, a peppery-tempered short-sighted gentleman, to whom nevertheless the general public owe a debt of gratitude for his industry in making and maintaining communications in an out-of-the-way part of the world such as we have under consideration. The Romans made straight roads in Great Britain and elsewhere, and Squire Rhino has made straight paths in Africa. Footpaths made by natives wobble about in a particularly irritating way. Not so those of old Pachyderm. His pass from one point to another with mathematical precision. Being a gentleman of

considerable pedestrian powers, once made they are considerably used, and do not become overgrown. These paths in a densely-bushed country are an inestimable convenience, and may be freely used when the owner is not abroad; but it is as well to step very quickly aside if he is espied in the offing. One may take refuge in the nearest tree, usually a sufficiently uninviting thorn, from which one can watch his aldermanic progress in security, until such time as it is safe to give the signal "all clear."

I have referred already to a rhino-path leading from the neighbourhood of the house to the back blocks behind the hills. From its general direction I think it must have originally continued just in front of the house—a bed of rose-trees now occupying its ancient site. As one rises with the sun at 6 A.M., one retires early, generally about 9 P.M. I was sleeping the sleep of the just one night after a long day in the sun, when I was awakened by a prodigious snorting and grunting, and the next moment the whole house seemed to be shaken to its foundations—metaphorically that is to say, as it was, so to speak, superimposed on the earth's level. The impression I received was as though some battering-ram had been applied to the wall, and I heard the dried earth rattling down. Knowing the frailty of my walls, I felt that this onslaught had only to be repeated to cause a complete breach. I hastily lit a candle and reached for my rifle, which, with my revolver, I always kept handy. I fail to see what I could have done with either had the attack been pressed home; still they gave one a certain sense of security. I was in the act of retreating to the next room, leaving my bedroom to the mercy of the would-be intruder, when the commotion outside ceased as suddenly as it had begun. There was one more snort and then dead silence. The night was pitch dark, and one could see nothing from the window—so styled by courtesy; it was merely a hole in the wall—so after remaining on the *qui vive* for a few minutes, I decided to postpone further inquiry till the morning, and resumed my disturbed slumbers. The farm boys always paraded outside the front of the house at 6 A.M. to receive their tools and get their orders for the day's work. On this particular morning conversation outside was somewhat more animated than usual, and I caught the word "hurua," Kikuyu for rhinoceros. This quite accorded with the theory I had formed as to the nature of the author of my disturbed night. I went round to the back of the house to reconnoitre, and found a litter of dust and chunks of red earth knocked out of the wall; also the unmistakable footprints of hurua. Apparently the brunt of the charge, if such it was, had been received by one of

the stout poles which supported the trellis-work frame on which the mud was plastered, so that no complete breach had been made. I merely record what I heard and saw. I can offer no satisfactory explanation; but then who can explain the blunderings of old Pachyderm! Those who know him best are most chary of laying down the law as to what he will do and what he will not do. Let me offer my own explanation. Our night traveller was returning from some affair of his own—he may have been courting and have received a rebuff—a lady rhino lived not far off round the back of the hills; I had seen her and her calf a week or two previously. Passing to the back of the house he winded me; then, either to attack or escape—with a rhino it is often a matter of conjecture which he has in view—he made a blind rush and struck the wall. Then realising his mistake, and possibly seeing the flash of the match through the open window, he had sheered off. There seems little doubt that if it had been a grass hut I should have had him in my bedroom, with every chance of being carried away, bed and all, on his horn.

Previous to my taking up my residence on Tom Tiddler's ground, and, as a matter of fact, before the house had been built, a friend and myself were one day riding our mules along the same path. Our gun-bearers were following behind us. We had been out all the morning looking for rhino and had seen none. After a rest we had set out again about 4 P.M. We had rounded the shoulder of the hill, and I was turning over in my mind the advisability of dismounting. The path led along the steep slopes of the hillside, and it seemed to me that should we meet the owner of the road we should be in a distinctly disadvantageous position. We had come to a point where the path dipped to cross a gully, on the far side of which it inclined sharply upwards. My friend, who was riding in front, was just descending the decline, when I happened to glance upwards. Just over the brow the huge bulk of a rhino appeared to my astonished gaze. Seen thus, immediately above us outlined against the sky, his enormous size was accentuated, and the impression that flashed across my mind was that he was primeval, huge, and absolutely out of proportion to all his surroundings. He appeared to be browsing off the leaves of a small bush, and was not more than thirty yards from us. I gave a suppressed hiss to my companion, and we hastily dismounted. I seized my rifle from the boy behind, and just as I sighted behind his shoulder, rhino must have got our wind, for he ceased feeding, raised his head, and pricked his ears. I pressed the trigger without more ado. He sank back on his haunches, and we scrambled up the steep bank. As we appeared on the

brow, he made an effort to raise himself, but blood was pouring from his mouth, and it was evident that my bullet had found his lungs. A couple more shots finished him. He had a 21-inch horn, which was quite a respectable measurement for that district. I have often thought since of the nice little affray we should have been in for if he had not paused on his way to feed off the bush. Our mules would have been scrambling down the bank of the gully, when rhino would have dropped upon us as from the clouds as he came over the brow. He would have rushed blindly forward on his own pathway, and we and the mules and the boys behind would have been hurled in a confused mass down the steep hillside. Of course we should not have been riding, and should have deserved all we got. In the bush it is always the unexpected that happens, and however blank the day may have been, it never does to relax one's vigilance.

As regards the carnivora, leopard were very numerous in this locality. Not only did one frequently hear them at night, but their presence in considerable numbers was apparent from their spoor on the game-paths, which showed up very noticeably in the rainy season, when these highways, softened by the heavy rains, afforded a most interesting study of the wayfarings of those of my neighbours who moved chiefly by night. Before my arrival at the Crossways a valuable pointer had been seized by a leopard quite close to the house, and carried off into the afore-mentioned donga. On another occasion in the middle of the afternoon my syce boy, who was cutting grass in front of the house, saw a leopard trying to stalk the two young ostriches I have referred to above. Unfortunately I was some way from the house superintending the ploughing, and by the time he had fetched me the leopard had retired disappointed into the donga. This appearance in broad daylight on the lawn—or rather what ought to have been the lawn—seemed to be an unwarrantable intrusion on the part of Spots, and argued contempt bred of undue familiarity. Some counter-demonstration appeared to be indicated. Having made a wide clearing across the donga, I organised a beat the following afternoon, hoping that the intruder might be lying up there again, and that I might have the chance of a shot; but he failed to materialise, so I consoled myself by setting fire to the dry grass and bush which concealed this favourite catwalk.

With a view to getting some meat for the larder, I was out one day after the same herd of congoni which I have mentioned as welcoming me when I first came to take up residence in their neighbourhood. It was only a day or two after my first arrival in the country, and I was staying with a friend on a neighbouring farm. It was, I remember, a very hot

morning, and for three or four hours I tried to get within range of them; but they were never still for a moment, and at last I decided to leave them and go home. The only weapon I had with me was a Mauser ·275, a new rifle which I had not yet had an opportunity of using on game. In trying it at a target, the pull-off was rather too stiff for my liking. We—that is to say, the Masai boy who was with me and myself—were making our way through long grass some five feet high, when suddenly there was the sound of something moving in the grass ahead of us. I turned to the boy and asked him what he thought it was. I thought he said "Chui" (a leopard); I discovered afterwards he had said "Si'jui" (I don't know). We walked on a dozen paces or so, and just as we came round a large ant-hill he pointed ahead. Beyond the ant-heap, in the surrounding sea of grass, there was an open patch of ground where, owing to an outcrop of rock, no grass grew, and on the far side of this, some twenty paces distant, I came face to face with the overlord of the desmesne, a magnificent black-maned lion crouching, his head alone visible, the remainder of his body being concealed in the long grass. "Piga, bwana" (shoot, master), said the Masai boy in the same tone of voice he might have used if he had been inviting me to shoot at a guinea-fowl. On such an occasion one has to sum up things pretty quickly. I realised at once that at that distance with a magazine rifle I should have one shot, and one only, and that one must be through the brain. If he were not killed outright on the spot, in two springs he would be on me. On the other hand, if I refrained from molesting him, the probability was that he would not molest me. We stared at each other for some appreciable time—it seemed a long time to me,—and then he slunk off into the grass. From the peculiar behaviour of the congoni, the lion must, I think, have been trying to stalk them. A lion does not, as a rule, hunt in the middle of the day unless he is very hungry. It is therefore to be supposed he was in no better temper than I was at our mutual failure to get a dinner. The Masai boy asked me why I hadn't fired. The only reply I could think of was that I had come out with a small-bore rifle to shoot meat, and one doesn't eat lion! I fear I sank very low in his estimation. Thus unexpectedly does one meet with the local magnates. My friend had been living two or three years in this locality, and although constantly hearing lion at night had never seen one. In any district which is more or less settled the larger carnivora are very careful not to expose themselves unduly. On two other occasions only did I see lion rampant on this shamba. Once, at about 11 A.M. on a wet morning at the beginning of the heavy rains, I saw a

lioness in the distance going at full gallop from one thickly-wooded donga to another, and again one evening after 6 P.M. when there was very little daylight left, I saw another lioness out of range making her way stealthily along a game-path by the river.

I had almost forgotten to record a case of lion couchant. Returning to the house one day at noon, I saw lying in front of the entrance a lioness. She appeared to be dozing in much the same way as one has seen felines of her kind at the Zoo enjoying a siesta on a hot summer's afternoon. By this time, after some months' residence at the Crossways, I had arrived at the *nil admirari* state of mind advocated by the poet Horace as being the true philosophic attitude towards life in general, but this at first sight was, to say the least of it, startling. Then something in her attitude gave the show away. She was dead, and had been propped up by forked sticks on her far side out of sight. This was a little joke of the bullock boys, and I must admit they had posed her most artistically. Returning from the railway station with the bullock-cart, they had found her lying dead close to the cart-track on an outlying part of the estate, and had picked her up and brought her to the house. She was a young animal, not quite full grown, and bore traces of having been considerably in the wars. The boys suggested that she had been killed by a lion, but I am inclined to think it was a case of *cherchez la femme*. It is probable that some older lioness, whose charms may have been on the wane, had become jealous of this younger and more attractive feline, who may have been getting more than her fair share of their mutual lord's attention, whereupon a battle royal had ensued, probably during his temporary absence, in which the lady, let us say, of riper experience had come off best.

My residence at the Crossways came to an abrupt termination one day in August. We had just finished work for the day and I was preparing to go out with Jack to look for a partridge, when a Kikuyu boy from my neighbour's farm handed me a chit. It ran as follows: "Rumour has it that the Germans are over the frontier, and are marching to cut the railway. Will you come down and breakfast with me to-morrow, and then we can go into Nairobi and see what is going to be done about it?" As I rode past at dawn the following morning the congoni on the flats sped me, the parting guest, on my way with a salvo of jubilant coughs and sneezes. For the next few years shambas generally had to a great extent to look after themselves, their owners being mostly engaged in Hun-hunting over the border.

EASTERS IN IRELAND.

BY J. A. STRAHAN.

For a long time past my work has made it necessary for me to pay two visits each year to the Ulster capital, Belfast—one before Christmas, the other before or about that variable festival, Easter. On my Christmas visit I have, once my work in Belfast is over, to return as quickly as possible to deal with my work in London; but after dealing with my work in Belfast on my Easter visit, I pay a visit to the Irish capital, Dublin. The fact that my December visit is thus straitened does not matter much, because, for some reason which Providence may be able to guess but I cannot, all Ireland is invariably at that season in a (for her) unnatural state of peacefulness. Things are very different during the Easter season.

I will begin with the year before the outbreak of the Great War. When I arrived in Belfast perfect order prevailed, but the bulk of the population were in a very sullen state. The Home Rule Bill was in the thoughts of all. It had been twice passed by the House of Commons and twice rejected by the House of Lords. It must pass at the next and third time of asking, and the Government were resolved that it should pass. To the Ulsterman it meant that he should be handed over to the tender mercies of the Catholic (or Keltic) Irish, whom his friendship for England had made his enemies. And it was England that was handing him over; and it was, as the Nationalist newspapers exultantly were announcing, the army of England which was to subdue him to their power. The Ulsterman had no intention of being subdued; and he was organising that army of volunteers which, with their wooden guns then, the Irish Nationalists and their English co-conspirators jeered at, but which before long they learned to respect.

When I went to Dublin, things were not so peaceful there. The first thing strange I noticed after leaving Amiens Street Station was a dray overturned in the street, its load of Indian corn thrown out, the sacks ripped open, and their contents scattered over the pavement. A big policeman stood gazing calmly at the wreck. I, thinking it an accident, said to him, "They must be poor sacks to burst in that way." "Och," he answered, "they didn't burst at all. The sthrikers cut thim open: I saw it wid my own eyes." "But," I said in surprise, "did you not try to prevent it?" "No," he replied; "ye see, we have ordhers not to

take sides: it makes things aisier."

I could not help wondering if allowing an army to be openly recruited to defy the law in the North, or allowing strikers to destroy property in the South, would in the end make things in Ireland much "aisier." However, that was Mr Birrell's notion of popular government.

About Easter next year (1914) I was once more in Belfast. Things had then advanced considerably. The Home Rule Bill was up for its third reading. Ulster's opposition to it had only grown stronger. Her volunteers were no longer men with wooden guns: every day thousands of them marched through the streets in perfect formation in khaki uniforms, and with real rifles which they knew well how to use. But the English Government was still determined to force them to submit to their and England's enemies: Mr Churchill was telling how blood would flow, the fleet was being sent to Belfast Lough, and the regiments at the Curragh of Kildare were being ordered to march on Ulster. The Ulstermen were prepared for any fate; and still, while openly preparing to resist the King's soldiers, everywhere they were maintaining the King's peace. During this "insurrection" not a man, woman, or child, not a soldier, policeman, or civilian, received a hurt at their hands. Suddenly the collapse came. The regiments at the Curragh looked askance at the orders to march north, their officers by dozens resigned their commissions, the fleet which came to Belfast Lough saluted the volunteers' flag, and sailed elsewhere—and Mr Asquith declared that the coercion of Ulster was unthinkable. Nevertheless, the volunteers continued their organisation and their drilling: they had no confidence in English Liberals.

When I went on to Dublin I imagined that I should find the people there very much upset over this reverse to Home Rule. As a matter of fact, I found they were not bothering themselves over it a bit. What they were concerned about was the proceedings of the Transport Union. It was an openly Communist body, and it was gradually acquiring control of the left wing of the Nationalist Volunteer Army. The average moderate Nationalist regarded both Union and Army with aversion and fear; and the constant complaint I heard was, not that the Government had failed to suppress the Ulster Volunteers, but that it had failed to suppress Sinn Fein and to smash Larkin and Connolly and their ragamuffin brigade. As for the English soldiers and officers, they were as popular—especially with the ladies—as ever they had been, which is saying much.

What struck me as peculiar was that the most constant charge (and it was, I believe, a false one) which the Moderate Nationalists brought against

Larkin was that he was a son of James Carey, the witness whose evidence brought to the gallows that band of assassins, the Invincibles. Now the Moderate Nationalists always wanted the world to believe that they regarded the Invincibles with unspeakable horror. Yet in their minds—or at any rate on their tongues—it was an infamy to be connected with the man whose evidence convicted the murderers. The mentality (or honesty) of a Moderate Nationalist is remarkable.

The next time I visited both of the capitals of Ireland was in 1916. The war was then at its bitterest and most distressing stage. Belfast was at peace, but not at rest. The bulk of the Ulster Volunteers had joined the Ulster Brigade. Many of them had already served and fallen at Gallipoli; but their terrible trial had yet to come—that famous advance at Thiepval, when they carried the German trenches, and left in them, or on their way to them, half their number, dead or wounded. Their friends at home had established in the grounds of the University of Belfast, at their own cost, the Ulster Volunteer Hospital, one of the greatest and best military hospitals in the Three Kingdoms. The tens of thousands of shipbuilders and engineers, whose services the Government preferred in their yards and shops rather than in the field, were working Sundays and Saturdays, day and night, producing guns and ammunition, torpedo-boats, queer boats, and aeroplanes for the use of their comrades in France and Flanders and on the sea. The clatter of their hammers never ceased. Every purse was open, every muscle was exerted, to ensure that England should not succumb to the enemy's hosts. All party passions, all sectional feelings, were subdued to that one desire—the safety of the British Empire.

When I went to Dublin I found the city in a ferment. The threatened alliance between the Transport Union Communists and the left wing of the Nationalist Volunteers had taken place; and the one subject which the members of the alliance were discussing was armed rebellion. There were two parties among them—one for an immediate rising, the other for a postponed one,—postponed, that is, until England was more exhausted by the Great War. The two parties were carrying on a public controversy on the point, with which Mr Birrell did not interfere, no doubt because, I suppose, he thought it made "things aisier." At every street corner little news-sheets were being hawked by raucous-voiced men advocating an immediate insurrection. Every night crowds gathered before Liberty Hall to hear loud-mouthed orators declaim against the tyranny of England, which permitted them to spout treason. Rebel officers in gorgeous green uniforms and

plumed hats strutted daily along the streets. Battalions of half-ragged but wholly armed men marched nightly through the city, accompanied by wholly ragged crowds, who spat on and kicked every soldier of the King they happened to meet. To any one with eyes to see and mind to understand, it was merely a question of days when the explosion would take place. Still Mr Birrell refused to interfere, and reprobated any official who pointed out that rebellion was at hand. The policy still was "to make things aisier." I left Dublin on (I think) Good Friday, and by Easter Monday I learnt that Dublin was entirely in possession of the rebels, and British soldiers were, wherever met, being shot down like dogs in the streets of that capital city of the Empire. That was the first result of "making things aisier."

I am wrong in saying entirely in possession of the rebels. That old foundation of Elizabeth, Trinity College, stands between the General Post Office in the north and Stephen's Green in the south, and looks straight up Dame Street to Dublin Castle. It has always been a bulwark of loyalty, and it was so now. Its officers' service corps turned out at the first news of the rebellion, lined its granite walls, and prevented union between the rebels, who held the Post Office and Stephen's Green, and who swarmed about the Castle end of Dame Street. But for this service the reoccupation of Dublin would have cost the English and Ulster troops far heavier losses than it did. It is a service England has, but the Sinn Feiners have not, forgotten. Like every man or institution that has served England in times of danger, the Silent Sister of Oxford and Cambridge will yet have cause to regret her loyalty. If she had been wise, she would have let England fight her own battles: it would have made things "aisier" for her.

Some weeks before the Easter of the following year I once more crossed to Belfast. The submarine war was then at its ghastliest height. The port of Belfast was "sealed." I could reach the city only by Larne and Stranraer. Our boat was convoyed over the Moyle by a destroyer on the sea and an airship in the sky. They were very much needed, for as an officer of a Highland regiment —who turned out to be an Ulsterman—told me on board the boat, two great ships had the night before been sunk at Black Head just outside Larne harbour. When we landed I found plenty of corroboration: the railway men told me they knew not how many had been drowned, but they had sent hundreds of survivors on to Belfast. And when I went to Belfast, I found lifeboats belonging to another liner lately sunk just outside Belfast Lough lying in the harbour.

The people of Belfast were as peaceful, as resolute, and as

busy as they were the year before. All the shipyards and all the engineering shops were working day and night; all the hospitals and many of the private houses were crowded with wounded or sick soldiers; and the whole inhabitants—barring the overawed Sinn Feiners—were grimly resolved to see the war through to a successful end, whatever the cost.

Just before Easter I went on to Dublin. I found the heart of the city from the Custom House almost to the Four Courts, and from the Liffey almost to Rutland Square, in ruins. The rebellion which had broken out a year ago had been suppressed with an iron hand. The soldiers, if they did their work roughly, had done it well. When they gave up control every dangerous rebel in Ireland was dead or a prisoner. All that the Government had to do was, to use a colloquialism, "to sit tight," and peace was secured for half a century.

But sitting tight was uncomfortable. The Government still wished to "make things aisier." So the iron hand of the soldier was followed by the oily hand of the politician. The "statesmen" were determined to effect a "settlement," by getting the rebels and the Loyalists and the Communists and the capitalists to come to an agreement. To create a proper "atmosphere" for such an agreement, all the rebels and Communists taken prisoners by the soldiers were liberated by the "statesmen," and all the anti-English who had not been killed were kissed by England. Of course no settlement was made; but the liberated rebels were drawing thousands of recruits by pointing to the ruined heart of Dublin, and winning the terrified support of the Moderates by convincing them that they were the real victors.

Moreover, they were not secretly, but openly as before, planning a new rebellion. It was to be new in a double sense. The late rising had convinced the conspirators that they had no chance in a fight in the open field. Their plan now was to achieve success by assassination. As yet that plan was only being debated. Before long it was in full and fearsome operation.

We will pass on to Easter 1921. When I went to Belfast I found feeling there much changed, both as regarded the British Government and the southern rebels. The average Ulsterman had become convinced that the British Government either was not able or did not want to suppress the southern rebels. He felt just as the Moderates in Dublin had done four years before, that the real victors in the rebellion had been the rebels. Sooner or later, he was convinced, the Government of Ireland would be surrendered to them. He was resolved that he should never submit to that rule; and so he had most

unwillingly accepted what he had never asked for, and what he never wanted—self-government for Ulster. His object had always been to remain what he had been born—nothing more or less than a citizen of the United Kingdom, just as is a man born in Middlesex or Mid-Lothian. He only accepted self-government for the six counties, because he feared that if he did not accept it worse might follow; and because if he did accept it the Government of England had promised that whatever happened in Southern Ireland, that self-government and those six counties would remain free and unaffected.

As regards the southern rebels the Ulsterman's feelings had become very bitter. As I have written before, at first he had a much greater respect for the Sinn Feiner than for the "Moderate" Nationalist, because he believed the Sinn Feiner was honest, and that he could never bring himself to believe about the Moderate Nationalist, whom he always regarded as (and events have proved correct) a complete devotee of the jumping cat. But the weakness of the full-blooded Sinn Feiner for assassination, even when its displays were confined to the South, disgusted him; and when they began to appear in the North, maddened him. A month or two before I arrived in Belfast a Major Smyth, D.S.O. — an Ulsterman — had been slaughtered one Sunday at Lisburn on his way home with his mother from church; a little later four Black and Tans had been slaughtered in their bedrooms in Belfast; and while I was there three other Black and Tans, and a civilian who tried to protect them, were slaughtered in a lonely square in the city. I have written [1] how, when the next day I visited the scene of the last murders, a woman cried vehemently to the little crowd, "As sure as there is a God in heaven we'll yet pay them out for this!" And I spoke of the fear that before long reprisals in Ulster would take a more terrible form than the wrecking of public-houses owned or frequented by Sinn Feiners.

When I went to Dublin I found the people there perfectly calm, though murder stalked the streets. The general opinion was that the worst trouble was over. So much was that the case that the moderate Nationalist was showing signs of coming over to the Loyalist side. As for the Loyalists, they were convinced that the authorities had, in the words of Sir Hamar Greenwood, "murder by the throat." And I think they were right. What had ruined the Invincibles was ruining the Sinn Fein murder league—that is, the informer was once more abroad. It was merely a question of time when every assassin would be at any rate in the hands of the police.

[1] See "A Word in Season," 'Blackwood's Magazine,' June 1921.

This year I once more visited Ulster before Easter. I found the people furious—furious as only a people can be who believe themselves betrayed by their friends. The authorities no longer had "murder by the throat"—they had murder by the hand. When the English Government took murder's hand, they had pledged themselves to agree to nothing which would be detrimental to the six counties. When the Premier of the Six Counties was on his way to Thiepval to open the new Helen's Tower, built there to commemorate the thousands of Ulstermen who had died that England might live, he had been stopped in London to be informed that England's Government had agreed with the old allies of the Germans to a government of Ireland by those old allies, with liberty to the Six Counties to vote themselves out; but if they did so a commission was to decide how much of the Six Counties was to get out, and what remained in was to pay a tribute of £8,000,000 a year for electing to remain a part of the United Kingdom. It was hoped, no doubt, that Ulster would follow the advice of that famous galloper in all directions, the Lord Chancellor, and consider her interests rather than her ideals—advice the giver of which will never require. Perhaps in the end she will.

I found also that the fear I entertained a year before was realised. The continued murders of policemen and the hurling of bombs at tram-cars carrying Loyalist workmen through Sinn Fein slums had been met by the most horrible reprisals. The meaner quarters of the town were in a sort of state of siege. Every tram-car passing through them was protected with wire-netting against bombs. At every street corner pickets of soldiers with steel helmets stood on guard. Armoured cars filled with police carrying carbines perambulated hourly every district. Nevertheless, every morning brought its record of more murders. The policy of do as you please had not in Belfast "made things aisier," not did its people think their devotion to England had been duly rewarded, though no doubt the Sinn Feiners did.

When I went on to Dublin I found there the triumph of treason was complete. On all the public buildings not in ruins the Union Jack had been pulled down. British soldiers had disappeared from their guard-rooms, and young men in greenish khaki had taken their place. The quarter of the city which had been destroyed in the rebellion had been rebuilt in extravagant style at the expense of the British taxpayer. "Moderate" Nationalists were loudly exulting over the way *they* had driven the English out of Ireland—they who all along had been ready to side with the stronger. The Loyalists—at least as national in their devotion to Ireland as they—

were silent, ashamed, and, I fear, afraid.

In one way, however, things had improved: political murder had for the moment ceased in the city. That does not mean that peace was restored. An antipathy as bitter as that between the Sinn Feiners and the Black and Tans had sprung up between the left wing of the Sinn Feiners and the right wing of the Moderate Nationalists. Again, as before the 1916 rebellion, at every street corner little news-sheets were being hawked by raucous-voiced men advocating a new insurrection, this time against the new Government. Again, every night crowds gathered before Liberty Hall to hear loud-mouthed orators declaim against the tyranny, this time of the Moderate and the capitalist. The split which I long ago foretold [1] had taken place. The struggle between Sinn Fein and loyalty having ended, the struggle between the Haves and the Have Nots had begun.

I bought some of the little news-sheets and listened to some of the speeches. Their argument appeared to me irresistible. They amounted to this: "It was to us, the gunmen, that the British Government capitulated; it was to us they surrendered the rule of Ireland. Now the Moderate Nationalists, whom they despised and we despise, want to appropriate the fruits of our victory. We will keep by the gun what we have won by the gun." And if they have as they assert, and as everybody I met in Ireland believes, 80 per cent of the I.R.A. with them, they will keep it. And the Conservatives of England who gave to rebellion what rightly or wrongly they refused to reason, will then be able to plume themselves not merely on having broken up the British Empire, but also on having established a military Bolshevist State in the Western world. Such are the fruits of Coalition, and a policy of "making things aisier."

[1] See "Opposites," in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' June 1920.

THE BLOOD DROP STONE.

BY EDMUND VALE.

If a casual observer were asked to describe Warren, he would probably say that he was a good practical mechanic. Knowing him well myself, I should describe him as a poet who could not write poetry, an artist who could not paint, and a musician who could not compose. I suppose the world is full of people to whom one could apply this definition, but few there are who press their inclinations so far as to discover a new medium in which they can excel.

Warren's pet theme, on which, I remember, in college days, he used to discourse to a degree bordering on fanaticism, was the *fitness* of Nature. As, unfortunately, he did not possess a brilliant or even interesting manner of address, one was easily led into boredom rather than enthusiasm by listening to him. It is doubtful whether in any community other than that of Cambridge undergraduates his dull harangues upon his all-absorbing topic would have gained any hearing at all. As it was, however, towards the end of his third year quite a number of people were interested, if not enthusiastic, in what came to be known as "Warren's Inevitable," and the thing bid fair to become, not a cult indeed—Warren was no cult breeder—but a philosophy.

Warren's Inevitable was stress laid upon the harmonies in Nature. There was harmony, Warren said, not only in all the colours both of dead and living things in the natural landscape and also in all the sounds of dead and living things, but an extraordinary co-operation in harmony between the two. For instance, savage-*looking* scenery is tenanted by birds and beasts of uncouth utterance. In such a place the winds will whirl in a peculiar way and the waters fall with a noise of menace. By the reedy fen the waters, winds, and birds all support the ocular impression of rest and calm. In places of luxuriant growth the nightingale and thrush are found. It is when Nature looks most forbidding that thunder, her most terrible voice, is heard: and so on. As Warren advanced with his theories he took up the subject of phonography. His idea was that the most beautiful of Nature's sounds were as well deserving of record as the pictures she gave to the eye. It was not long before he was able, by means of electrical devices, to make records of the songs of different birds, of the chirruping of grasshoppers, of the noise even of winds and waters.

In the late spring of 1914 I

had a letter from Warren. In six pages it contrived to convey to me that I was invited to spend a week with him where he and his recording apparatus were encamped on the coast of North Wales. It fell out happily that I was in need of a holiday, so I accepted. Through the inscrutable workings of Luck, my sole travelling companion in the last part of my journey was a brisk little gentleman who was proceeding to precisely the same destination as myself—namely, to Warren's camp. When we had made this discovery of mutual interest he introduced himself more completely by handing me a card where his name was set forth in the American style as Cornelius P. Brudd. The qualification Perfecto Gramophone Company was also annexed. This announcement caught my eye with some amusement. Was it really true that the great Inevitable was going to be commercialised? Mr Brudd confirmed my suspicion: he was indeed a feeler from the great world journeying to judge how far this new class of record could be exploited for the amusement of the public.

My companion was an Englishman with a Canadian experience. He was very bright and optimistic about the works of Warren, and quite hopeful that my old friend could be weaned from his disinterested, artistic, and scientific investigations, and made to serve the ends of Cash and Boom. As, however, I had come on this visit to escape from commercialism, I was a little annoyed at the presence of Cornelius P., although he averred that he was only going to stay for one night, and I refused his proffer of a lift in his motor-car from Pwllheli Station, preferring the more antiquated method of the rustic mail-cart.

"Well," said he, "you must do as you like. I've never been round this neck of the woods before. But I guess you'll be tired some before you see the noble city of Aberdaron!"

The mail-cart certainly was not true to the service watchword of "Post Haste"; but as we drove up and down the pretty little hills and came at last on to the open moorland, where the gorse blazed and the blue sea lay sparkling in the distance at the end of the Carnarvon peninsula, I congratulated myself on my choice of transport. The "noble city" of Aberdaron at last presented itself suddenly at the foot of a steep hill wedged in between a trout stream and the sea. My impression was a quaint water-wheel, a quaint little stone bridge, a small compact group of low, whitewashed cottages, and a church whose graveyard was bigger than the whole village. "Yes," said my friend the postman when I remarked this fact. He pointed out to sea: "This graveyard bury him the

whole worrld as well as Aberdaron."

Warren did not meet me, but the landlord of the Anchor Inn gave me his whereabouts and directions how to find him. It appeared that he was camped on a cliff about a mile away. I was in no great hurry to get to him, as I thought whatever business had to be talked had better be got over before I arrived. I had never seen Warren's patent phonograph. I had not, in fact, thought very much about it until I met Cornelius P. But somehow, though one would, of course, disallow this admission in public, the new fact that pennies seemed about to be turned out of Warren's Inevitable raised the thing on a higher plane of interest, and I felt myself growing appreciably more anxious to see the apparatus that recorded the sounds of winds and waves.

I had been travelling all night, and the afternoon was stiflingly hot, so I walked at my leisure, as buzz-brained as any holiday-maker, on the beach at the edge of the tide, where, in the wet zone, every other stone appeared a priceless gem. The great solemn wall-like waves, with their sparkling ebullition and their soft aftermath of brine and lather, filled me with the old unfailing pleasure of the sea. Was it not now among probable things that all this stir of lights and sounds in Aberdaron Bay might be carried bodily even into the exhausted atmosphere of the cinematograph theatre at Reading, which my wife and I honour once a week, by means of Warren's invention? This reflection raised my friend from his old memory picture, where the enthusiast wrestled unceasingly in the coils of prolixity while spectators yawned, to a wizard conjuring in the midst of a clapping audience.

When I ascended the cliff I beheld the goal of my travel some quarter of a mile away. No less than three tents were pitched. Two men were visible. I had recourse to my field-glasses, and reconnoitred these individuals with great amusement. Warren was as he always had been. He was haranguing. His large head, with its curly-wig mop, was wagging and bobbing. Cornelius P. sat opposite him on the sward, supported on stiffened arms and outsplayed hands. His little billycock hat was set back, and his face, even at this distance, wore the look I was so well accustomed to, of amazed boredom. I was greatly entertained. I bore down upon the couple with skippings and jumpings and hallooings.

I gathered obliquely that Brudd had been suffering two hours of demonstration of records in which he had no interest whatever. In fact, I gathered shrewdly that he was already tying up his purse-strings and casting about for an excuse to depart before his appointed hour. I therefore

began at once to take upon myself the rôle of demonstrating salesman. Winds and waves I ruled out at once, and confined myself to the utterances of birds and men. Cases and cases and cases of records I handled with the bold confidence of a tailor trying to hypnotise a customer with bales and parcels from unexplored shelves. It was no good poor Warren trying to foist off on me, "Tearing sound made by starlings flock-gathering in the autumn," or such an alluring triumph as "Sound of doe rabbit burrowing underground," or "Puffin and razor-bill contesting site for a nest"; I went for such vulgarities as the songs of the nightingale, thrush, and blackcap, and gradually Mr Brudd began to revive.

The advantage of Warren's system of recording was that you were able to do it from a distance. You had a microphone, very similar to the mouthpiece of a telephone. It was a small box about ten inches square. You placed this where the sounds were expected to make themselves heard, and connected yourself with it at any distance you pleased by means of a light insulated cable. You had a telephone-receiver in circuit yourself, and you "listened in," as an exchange operator would say, until what you wanted to record sounded in your ear. Then you turned on your phonograph and took your impression. The whole thing was not very different really from the invention of Edison, except that you picked up your sounds over a telephone-line and employed amplifiers to develop it and give it more precise definition.

Warren certainly had some curiosities among his stock calculated to intrigue the lay mind. Amongst other experimental flights he had contrived to get his microphone installed at a railway booking-office, and one record rehearsed a lively dialogue between the booking-clerk and an old lady who insisted on buying a ticket to Brighton at Euston Station. Another was taken a foot below the surface in a public swimming-bath, where snatches of conversation sounded harsh and reverberating, and were punctuated in a ludicrous fashion by the whimper of rising bubbles and drippings and floppings and splashings. Poor old Warren! what a miserable tool he was that afternoon in the hands of the worldlings.

I begin to fear that I have allowed too much "head" to my disquisition. I set out with the idea of giving a true account of the tragic circumstance of the Blood Drop Stone which, at the beginning of July 1914, aroused so much interest. But somehow, when I took up my pen, I felt I could not overlook the lighter side of that memorable night, and I hope the reader may forgive my discursiveness.

The afternoon wore on towards evening, and the sun

lay low on the horizon. Brudd, who had intended staying the night at the Anchor Inn in the village, was by now so interested in Warren's repertoire, or rather mine, that he seemed unwilling to leave the camp. We were discussing the point as to whether or not he should stay the night with us and get a good farewell breath of sea air before he returned to his Perfecto Gramophonism, when a man, whom I had noticed for some time strolling about the cliffs fixing his gaze on various points of the horizon, came up to us. He was a burly heavy-shouldered man, well whiskered, and wearing bell-bottomed trousers and a wideawake hat.

"Good evening, gentlemen!" said he.

"Good evening."

"Too late for birds-nesting now, I doubt."

"Oh yes," said Warren. "But I am still busy with my machine, Mr Wilkinson. If you would like to hear any of my records it would give me great pleasure——"

"It's blowing up for thunder," opined the stranger, shutting one eye and wrinkling his upper lip so that his teeth appeared, and peering round in the way sailors do.

"Do you think so?" said Warren, excited at the prospect of storm-recording.

"Do I think so? I know it," said Mr Wilkinson; "and it'll rain like old Joey and blow fit to carry the paint off a picture, I doubt."

"Good!" said Warren.

"Good, do you call it?" said Wilkinson. "If I was you gentlemen I should call it very bad indeed. If you're caught up here in a buster you'll know all about it. If I was you I should stow all my gear and batten all down right snug and skip into the village for the night."

The old sailor seemed very anxious for our welfare, but the more pessimistic he became about the weather the more did Warren wax enthusiastic, until the good man gave us up as rash lubbers, and went away muttering. The prospect certainly did look very forbidding, and the sun was already obscured by large masses of cumulus cloud that were invading the sky from the south-west. It set now in a flare of yellow, reflecting on the sleek surface of the sea in a garish way, giving an air of false gaiety. The clouds soon lost their pretty clustered forms and merged into large tawny banks. The sea turned to a steely grey, and its surface became wizened by dry hot currents of air that puffed in our faces on the cliff like harbingers of evil.

These signs delighted Warren. "The old sailor was right," said he. "Everything is in tune for thunder. Listen to the low of the cattle: you never hear them low like that at any other time. Listen to the cry of the gulls: they know what's coming! Listen to the noise the water makes in the caves:

it never sounds like that except before a storm. Do you notice that sweet peculiar smell of growing things? It always seems to me that Nature's mood in thunder times is thoroughly morbid. She behaves like the hushed crowds at an execution. You can see and hear and smell in every inch of view how she is thrilling harmoniously with anticipation, subliming her overture to fit the part of her most dreadful spectacle!"

"Yes," said Brudd. "I should like to hear those nightingale records again. Which do you think is the best?"

"Number five, I think," said Warren good-humouredly. I laughed to myself at Cornelius P.'s strict adhesion to business. For an hour we played over bird-song records in the little ridge tent that was specially quilted and padded after the manner of a public call-box, so that no extraneous sounds would disturb the "listener in" when a record was being made. Brudd was becoming quite enthusiastic. A low mutter of thunder sent us outside to look at the weather. It was dark by now. The moon had evidently risen, and was shining somewhere, for, although everything was very obscure, the low clouds glowed uncertainly, as if they were made luminous by phosphorus. They seemed to be all packing and disparting and convolving. The wind still blew by fits in puffs and eddies. Only faintly could the sea be discerned, but the noise was louder than before, and every now and then, like a trumpet, came a hollow clangour of distant surf grinding a far-off beach. Warren made preparations for taking impressions of the coming storm and Brudd assisted, whilst I walked to the dim edge of the cliff. I thought I had never felt anything so impressive as this natural overture. I had always upheld the Warren Inevitable, but the real true facts of it had never been borne in upon me before. I felt now how true it was that Nature, quite irrespective of Man, was an organised whole, a wonderful, harmonious, self-sympathetic creation. And as I thought, far to the south-west lightning flashed over the sea. I saw its brilliant fluid path just as it might have been portrayed in an old-time steel engraving. The sequent brattle of the thunder was louder than the first had been. The storm was evidently coming our way.

Warren was now lowering his microphone over the cliff, which here descended sheer to the sea one hundred and fifty feet below. The microphone with its cable attached was lowered by a cord, on which every foot was tabbed like a sailor's lead-line. Fifty feet above the sea, Warren said, was the best spot for hearing the whole action of a cresting and breaking wave. The microphone being securely anchored, we returned to our stuffy little cubicle. Our host presented

us each with a headpiece receiver, such as I have seen Marconi wireless operators wear, and assumed one himself. Sure enough, I heard the waves breaking. Warren now made an adjustment on the rheostat of the amplifiers, and we other two vented a simultaneous exclamation at the novelty of the sensation we experienced. We might have been standing just above where the waves were breaking, so loud and realistic and dangerous did they sound, and not a bit telephonic. Warren's large quiet eyes glowed with the satisfaction of appreciated genius. They seemed to fill up the round rims of his glasses as he beamed on us. Then he took a record. It was really remarkable, and I felt my own little ego to wither with self-scorn when I thought of the patronising way I had always tolerated Warren's pet theme. As for Cornelius P., he shook his head, murmuring, "Vury impressive! Vury impressive!" I felt that the Perfecto purse-strings were loosened to heart's desire.

But the intermittent thunder and lightning was no more than a foretaste, for now with an astonishing suddenness the storm broke forth. A quick succession of three brilliant flashes of lightning dazzled us, intruding even into our quilted sanctum, and thunder, like the jostling of falling precipices, smote upon our ears. At the same time the wind rose to a tempest, and the rain descended with a roar on our little tent. Now flash followed flash, and the thunder was awful to listen to. I put down my head-receiver, for every time the lightning flashed it gave a sickening click.

We had taken three records of various phases of the storm. The thunder effects were all spoilt by the click which the lightning caused, so that Warren waited for a little before putting another on. The electric fury of the storm soon moderated, however, as did both the wind and the rain; and now, in the comparative hush, the waves broke on the cliffs with a long roar of indistinguishable articulation. After a spell of some five minutes, in which there was no lightning, Warren prepared to take a fourth record. I did not put on my receiver again, but watched the storm. Just after the record was started there came a long flickering flash of violet light accompanied by no thunder. Suddenly Brudd, whose face was quite intense with interest, tore the receiver from his head, and half sprang up as if he was stung. "What was that?" he said in a low frightened voice. Even the quiet and impassive Warren looked strangely. He also took off his receiver and looked at Brudd. "It was human," said he. "'My God!' that was what it said; how can it be human?" cried Brudd. The little metallic "ping" like a typewriter bell announced the end of the record. At the

sound of it both men jumped. As my receiver was off, I was not a party to what had transpired in the telephones. But I felt my flesh to go prickly all over and my mouth to dry up.

"There are funny stories about this place, too," said Warren, half to himself. "They say in storms like this men see the ghosts of vessels, lost long ago at sea, bearing up right in to the land, and hear the sailors wailing; that smugglers and wreckers are seen standing in the air in the place where the cliffs used to be, and making strange cries." The two men seemed to feel a mutual shrinking from trying the record over. Not until I mooted the matter myself did Warren do so. The sound of the raging sea was plain enough. Then came a little cackle, which I knew would be the long flickering flash that had come unaccompanied by thunder; then came two clearly-articulated words, "My God!" and nothing further thereafter but the roar of the sea. Again we played the record over. As the little machine pronounced those words there seemed to hang on them an expression of profound horror. The thunder rolled once more, and though now far away, there was a fulsome booming in it that struck us all, and we three remained silent for a while. Then we all began to talk at once. If that were a man he must be very close to the microphone, otherwise the sea would have drowned his voice. How could there be a man where the microphone was, fifty feet above the waves and a hundred feet below the cliff-top? We played the record once more, and the voice seemed to mock at us. But phonographs tell no lies; something had spoken.

We all three went out of the tent. The scene was much altered. It presented an appearance of exhausted violence. Large clouds, some ragged, some blurred, lagged slowly over the face of the moon. Rain fell in a sad soft way, and the wind droned and hummed over the uplands. Fitful patches of light travelled over the sea, and huge shadowy waves, with curling, foaming crests, were seen advancing shoreward. The air was full of the ringing, sluicing noise of troubled waters. For, I should think, ten minutes we yelled and hallooed down over the cliff's edge. But our voices sounded feeble and futile quaverings, and no reply came to our hails but the strange voices of sea-fowl that had been disturbed by the storm, and the interminable utterance of the wild Atlantic. Soaking wet, and a prey to indescribable feelings of insufficiency and smallness, not suffered often in a lifetime, we returned to the tent, and little Brudd grappled with the situation in a practical way that did him abundant credit.

"The ghost business doesn't

cut any ice anyway," said he. "There's a man there. How he got there, and what he's doing there, the good Lord knows. But he's there right enough, and some one must dangle down that cliff on a rope as soon as it is day. That's the clear pudding!"

Warren at once volunteered to be lowered, as he said he was quite used to it, having been frequently over the edge during the past two months examining the nesting-birds and taking records. But here I protested, as I am something both of an amateur climber and a yachtsman. So, to the relief of our overstrung spirits, we fell to a friendly rivalry, and it was at last decided that I should be the "dangler," as Brudd phrased it.

It seemed a long, long while before the grey of dawn appeared. We took it in turn to listen in on the phonograph circuit in case we should hear the voice again. But we heard it no more. In spite of our adopted attitude, that those mysterious spoken words were of human origin, I think the dread idea of the supernatural remained with us. The flickering lightning-flash, just before the voice from the outer dark had spoken, that was followed by no thunder, seemed singular in the extreme. I am sure that a hundred times before the dawn I called that sleek, quivering, violet flame back to memory. It was all very well for us to pile up proofs that it was brush discharge or sheet-lightning, a common phenomenon often following a heavy electrical disturbance. It was all very well for us to support each other in this theory: we none of us believed it. So great an impression had the spectral voice made on us that our minds were quite emptied of all other ideas but that. And, as the time of dawn approached, the topic grew and brooded on us to such an extent that we talked in whispers as if we were in church.

It was with mixed feelings of relief and dread that I started my descent down the cliff. Warren had both rope and crowbar in his little camp. He and Brudd managed the paying-out business in a way that I could not help remarking as amateurish. And yet, so great was the spell of the hour that I actually had no personal fears whatever. The stillness that now prevailed, the faint tenuous light, the soft shadows on the sea, the frail dissolving mist-puffs that garlanded the cliff's dark brow, the ponderous rhythmic plunge of the waves far below — all made up an air of enchantment, unreality, and illusion that I felt no qualm of giddiness. Gradually, bit by bit, I went down the steep precipice until I suddenly swung in space, and there, to my left hand, hung the microphone. I pulled twice on the cord from which this suspended, and my descent was arrested. I was opposite a great fissure

like a long horizontal wound gash, the upper lip of which beetled the lower edge so that, unless I was lowered much farther and climbed up again —no easy task—I had no hope of getting a foothold there. This great crevice certainly looked a likely place for any untoward happening. I now had myself lowered so that my shoulders were on a level with the bottom ledge of the fissure, and I pulled the microphone cord down with me in order to remain in communication. As I now hung perfectly free from contact with anything, I began to twist slowly round and round. I could not touch the ledge with my hand, although I could, of course, reach it perfectly well with my long ash staff. I found that by holding this in both hands, pushed out against the rock, I could keep myself steady, but not with one hand only. Taking Warren's large electric torch out of my pocket, I allowed myself to twirl, and I flashed on the torch. The beam, like that of a revolving lighthouse, splayed first on the cliff and then right into the chasm and out again.

I could not clearly tell, but I had a vague impression that some fearful thing had grinned at me. Slowly I twisted round again, and now my flesh crept as I discerned, in the torch beam, a shadowy huddled figure with a face like a death's head, laid sideways, assuredly grinning at me. Thrusting my torch back in my pocket, and holding my ash stave by its very tip with both hands, as I twirled yet again I thrust it as far into the rift as I could, shouting loudly from sheer funk at the same time. I felt my staff touch something that moved. There was a peculiar short rumbling noise, and a round black object launched itself out of the chasm. At the same time a fearful, ghastly, man-like object, with flaunting shreds and tatters, leaped right out at me. I was so dazed and terrified that I let go the stave, and clutched wildly in the air. And I caught something in my left hand, something that disparted with a snap from whatever else it was attached to. As I reached madly for the microphone cord with my right hand, out of the tail of my eye I saw the creature disappear below me into the crest of a breaking wave. All I can remember of the ascent is that I kept my left hand clenched as tightly as ever I could clench it lest whatever was therein should *move*.

My face must have reflected very truly the terror that I felt when I appeared above the cliff, for neither of my companions asked me any questions, and Warren at once ran for a restorative. I sat down on the heather scrub feeling quite foolish and tongue-tied, watching the new morning light brimming copiously from the Eastern sky. I think I was more revived by the sight of Warren in his solemn, earnest, lugu-

brious way pouring me out brandy than I was by the potency of the draught. Anyway, my powers of speech returned, and I said, "Now look!" and I released the strict closure of my left hand and opened it. There, in my palm, were three human fingers and a gold ring.

"My God!" exclaimed Brudd; and I cried out quite hysterically, "Don't say that, you damned fool; say something fresh!"

"Well, wire in and tell us all about it anyway," said Brudd a little tartly.

Then I told my experiences. But it seemed that I had brought from my expedition more darkness to bear on the subject than light. We looked at the fingers. They were mere bony joints without flesh or skin or nails, just held together by withered, blackened ligaments. The ring was a flat band of gold. A small leathery ridge of hard dried flesh still held it fixed to the bone. Round it was engraved the ancient posy "MIZPAH." This was a common enough thing to have on a ring. Such another "MIZPAH" ring can be seen in any jeweller's stock-in-trade. But now, as a link in the night's events, this word, with its old Hebrew covenantal significance, seemed to strike a deep pathetic note: "The Lord watch between me and thee."

We discussed the whole matter over till we were crazy. We talked our wits to a standstill. It was my suggestion that, as we were so tired and as Brudd would have to return in the course of the day, and must first of all get some sleep, we would all breakfast at the Anchor Inn in the little village. It was also thought that the landlord might throw some light on whom the ring had belonged to. At nine o'clock, accordingly, we arrived in the village.

Quite a lot of people were assembled at the Anchor Inn. The bar parlour was crowded. On being specially summoned, Tom Roberts, the landlord, came forward. He was a remarkable man to look at. His features were refined and intellectual. Behind his gold-rimmed spectacles there looked out a pair of shrewd dark eyes. His iron-grey beard was forked, after the seaboard fashion, and brushed forward.

"Good morning, Mr Roberts," said Warren.

"Good morning, sir."

"Can we go into your parlour?"

"Yes, and welcome."

"Have you ever seen a ring like this worn by anybody hereabouts?"

Tom took the ring in his hands and examined it carefully. Then he tipped back his head and looked at us all in turn. "Dear me! Dearr me!" said Tom, shaking his head. "Won't you sit down, gentlemen?"

We all sat down obediently, and remained silent whilst the landlord looked at the ring and turned it round in his fingers,

held it up to the light at arm's length, and finally put it down on the table and seemed lost in the abstraction of his own thoughts. Then he folded his arms, and said in an airy kind of way, "Have you heard of the body they found this morning?"

"Body? What body?" said Brudd.

"John Pandy we always call him. John Wilkinson is his proper name."

"What! the man who lives at the little farm up the hill?"

"Yes, that's him. Evan Williams and Hugh Morris found him by the point there this morning. They had him when they were getting their lobster-pots in."

"What—drowned?"

"Yes, sure. Wait a minute now till I fetch you something."

"That is the fellow who warned us about the storm last night," said Warren.

Tom was not away very long. He whisked out of the door and whisked back again, holding a little leather bag and a slip of paper. "I've had it for years," said he, brandishing it before us. Brudd took charge of it and read it aloud in his eager business way and his Canadian intonation. It was a cutting from the 'Times,' and ran as follows:—

"A Fatal Gem.

"A peculiar instance of the fatality often ascribed to precious stones has come to our notice in connection with the late Mr Joseph Stanuel, who was among those that were lost in the sinking of the *Regina* last Good Friday. It will be remembered that the body of the millionaire, together with three other persons, was recovered from the sea on the Carnarvonshire coast near the village of Aberdaron. Mr Stanuel had long been interested in gems that have an historic tradition. On this fatal voyage he had with him a small collection of precious stones that he had acquired whilst travelling in Europe and the Near East. As far as we know, they were comparatively unimportant save for one. It was a famous ruby called the Blood Drop Stone. Many people will know of it by name, but few will have heard its history. It was said, originally, to have been brought from the East by a crusader, and presented to the Abbot of the Monastery of Aberconway. It was then mounted in a reliquary containing a drop of the blood of one of the early Christian martyrs. When the monastery was dissolved, by the order of Henry VIII., Thomas Cromwell himself acquired this reliquary, which he mentions in a letter to the King. But he complains that the Blood Drop Stone had disappeared from it. Nothing was heard of it till the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It was then found to be in the possession of an old Welsh family. It appears that they had fallen on bad days, and were in great

straits. The Queen, knowing of this, and being distantly related through the Welsh Tudors, ordered the Blood Drop Stone to be purchased for the regalia. It appears, however, that the proprietor was so convinced of the bad luck that dogged the owner of the stone, that his loyalty (that must have been staunch indeed) would not allow him to part with it, and he hid it in the bottom of a well, and gave out that it was lost. His heir, however, had no such scruples. He had it mounted by a London goldsmith and took it to court, and knowing James I. to be a connoisseur of trinkets, he tried to secure his majesty's interest with a view to purchase. But 'The wisest fool in Christendom' would have none of it, and the poor Welshman would have had to retain his evil heirloom had not Henrietta Maria, the wife of Charles I., taken a peculiar fancy to it. The source of our information attributes the fortunes of that unhappy Prince to the influence of this stone. Be that as it may, Charles II. is known to have possessed it, and to have sold it when, in the merry monarch's own words, he 'was on his travells.' From the Dutchman who bought it to the Englishman who last owned it—who does not wish his name disclosed—a long series of deaths and disasters is laid at its door. The late Mr Stanuel, full well knowing its history, was not, however, afraid to acquire it. In fact, he took such a fancy to it—so our informant says—that he had it mounted in a gold setting resembling the old astrologer's amulet, and made to wear round his own neck. It was not, however, on his person when his body was recovered at Aberdaron. It must, therefore, be in some strong box now lying in the sea's rich treasure-house, where it can no longer fascinate or injure man."

"Well—yes," said Brudd, putting down the cutting; "but what about this Blood Drop Stone?"

"Here it is!" said Tom Roberts, with a sudden dramatic opening of the palm—"here it is!"

We all looked up in astonishment, and met the deep glowering eye of an enormous ruby in the landlord's hand. It was encircled in a plain gold rim about an inch wide and an eighth of an inch thick. An inscription, evidently of modern origin, was engraved on the nimbus-like setting. It ran above: "I AM THE BLOOD DROP STONE," and below, "BEWARE OF ME."

"Now," said Tom, who, I could not help seeing, was greatly revelling in his dramatic opportunity, "I will tell you what I think: only *think*, mind you; God alone will ever *know*. John Wilkinson, that we always called John Pandy, because Pandy used to be the name of the little house where he lived, was the mate

of some small steamer that used to go from Cardiff with coal. The *Sweet William* was the name on her—yes, the *Sweet William*,—I remember them telling me well. And the captain of this *Sweet William* was Dick Parry. And he was the owner of her too. But John Pandy had some sort of share in the vessel. Neither Dick nor John were married, and when Dick got tired of carrying coals from Cardiff, he sold the *Sweet William* and bought that little house called Pandy, and bought also a little bit of land and started to farm it. But *Dewks*, these sailors they make more damage on a farm than anything else! That would be —let me see—1896. The *Regina* was wrecked in the early spring of '97, just after these two had settled down. And it was them that found Mr Stanuel's body. I remember them claiming the five shillings reward for it. The same money soon came through my hands in the bar parlour afterwards. But as that paper you read says, no jewels were found on Mr Stanuel—none whatever!

"I think it was that very time that I said something to Dick about his ring. He always wore one just the very same *exactly* as the one you showed me. I asked him where he had it from, and he told me he had it from foreign parts when he was a lad. I took particular notice on the word 'Mizpah' too. It's like a gift for a man to put to his sweetheart, thinking on that the Lord will watch between the two of them. So I chaffed Dick about his ring. 'Dewks anwyl Captain *bach*,' I said. 'And what is come to your sweetheart now? Which way has your covenant gone to?' Dick had the laughable grave look of people who talk of the Bible when they are a bit gone in drink. He turned very solemn to me, and said, 'If you knew your Bible as well as I do, you would understand that the old Mizpah was made between two men, and there wasn't a woman anywhere in it.' Then he turned round to John Pandy and put his glass up in the air with a shaking hand. 'The Lord watch between me and thee,' said he. John looked at him quite angry. 'There more froth comes up off you than off all Tom Roberts' beer,' says John."

"Where did you get that cutting from?" said Brudd.

"I had it off my wife's brother who is a lawyer in Liverpool—John Thomas Prythach is his name. I had it nailed up in the bar for a long time. All the worrld saw it. Well, now, this Dick Parry I'm telling you about went on a visit to Cardiff, at least so John Pandy said. Nobody ever troubled to make sure—of course. And then we heard that he took pewmonia and died. That was last year. Now I will tell you what I think—only *think*, mind you,

having heard your story. I think that these men had the jewels off that Stanuel, and sold all of them but this ruby. Sailors, specially Welsh ones, are very superstitious. I think they must have had some quarrel about it. What did they do? Well, I think—God forgive me if I talk wrong against the dead—but I *think* that John killed Dick, and to get rid of him he put him in that crack in the rock. No doubt he thought the birds would make a meal of him, and there'd be an end. He was a sailor, and he could get where no one else could. When you came here a month ago and put your tent right over the place where Dick was hid, and started to get men to lower you on ropes to look for birds' nests, John got worried——"

"He was one of the men I hired to lower me," put in Warren. "And he insisted several times that the rock was very unsafe."

"That's you!" said Tom. "That's you! Well, I think when he saw that you wouldn't go from there, he wasn't satisfied that his job on poor Dick was properly done. Now the flesh was gone, he wanted to get rid of the bones as well. What should he do for a sinker? Why not one of those round iron balls you put to an old cow's leg to keep her from wandering? Isn't that what you saw roll out of the crack when you poked in your stick? And the weight of it made poor Dick jump out afterwards? When John seen two more of you coming on the cliff-top he got frightened. So no matter about the weather, he was at it last night with his sinker and his things. Nobody but God can ever tell what happened then. Either he slipped or, more likely by what you say, he went mad, having in mind what was printed on the ruby. Perhaps when the lightning came and showed him his mate all fallen to bits, and nothing that wasn't decayed except that ring with Mizpah on it, he thought of those words Dick had said in front of me in the bar parlour, and he felt that terrible lonely in the sight of Heaven that he jumped in. Anyway, Evan Williams and Hugh Morris had him when they went to get in their lobster-pots, and very battered he was too; we all said he'd fallen off the rocks. And the ruby was in this leather bag hanging round his neck by a little chain. I had it off the doctor, but I must give it back to him, as he says it must go up to London to the Crown. I should put it in the sea again if I was the king."

When Tom Roberts was gone we remained silent. The stress of the night was beginning to tell on me. I felt alternate impulses of sleep and wakefulness to surge in my mind. My thoughts hovered in the borderland of dreams. I ceased to distinguish the real from the unreal, but still the strange

events of the last twelve hours, like a short play stuffed with climax, paraded themselves before me time and time again. The man on the cliff, the thunderstorm, the voice from Nowhere, the awful creature with the death's head that had appeared to spring upon me, the three fingers and the ring, the drowned sailor, the monstrous malignant eye of the Blood Drop Stone that had glittered on me even as it had on kings and princes centuries ago.

A hand touched me lightly on the shoulder and I came wide awake with a start. It was Cornelius P. Brudd. He spoke in a whisper, for Warren was fallen sound asleep. "With a note appended in our catalogue of an account of the inquest and the evidence given by Warren, Esq., B.A., that record would go like hot cakes!"

I felt a smouldering merriment somewhere in the neighbourhood of the cockles of my heart, and I said, "Mr Brudd, you are the only one of us that has got any sense. Will you see if you can find a Mrs Tom Roberts anywhere, and suggest to her bacon and eggs for three?"

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY MISER.

BY BERNARD DARWIN.

ONE night in the autumn of 1789 Mr Partis, a London lawyer, was staying in a tumble-down old country-house in Berkshire, whither he had driven down from town in his carriage. If it had been a stormy night the rain would have kept him awake by splashing on to his face through a hole in the roof, while the windows, mended here and there with brown paper, rattled in their crazy frames. As it was, Mr Partis was fast asleep when, at about two o'clock, he was roused by the sound of bare feet on his bedroom floor.

"Who's there?" he cried in some alarm.

The feet came pattering towards his bed in the darkness, and a voice said very humbly and civilly, "Sir, my name is Elwes. I have been unfortunate enough to be robbed in this house, which I believe is mine, of all the money I have in the world—of five guineas and a half and half-a-crown."

"Dear sir," replied Mr Partis, no doubt relieved that he was not to have his throat cut, "I hope you are mistaken; do not make yourself uneasy."

"Oh no, no," returned the voice, "it's all true; and really, Mr Partis, with such a sum—I should have liked to see the end of it."

A few days later this precious hoard was found in a corner behind a shutter, and a little later again its owner had seen the end of it, for he had died and left behind him about £800,000.

This was John Elwes "of Stoke in the County of Suffolk, Esquire," and of Marcham in Berkshire and Thaydon in Essex, some time Member of Parliament, and perhaps the most celebrated miser of all time. It is a reputation which he owes partly, no doubt, to his own talents, but chiefly to the admirable biography of him written by his friend Edward Topham. This is a book not so widely known as it deserves, nor always appreciated by those who read it.

"John Elwes is the next, sir," said Silas Wegg, turning over the lives of famous misers. "Is it your pleasure to take John Elwes?"

"Ah," said Mr Boffin, "let's hear what John did."

But as it seemed that John had not hidden anything to speak of, Mr Boffin preferred Daniel Dancer. From a purely technical point of view he was right, for Dancer was the complete miser—crazy, filthy, unredeemed. Moreover, Mr Boffin, though he thought Gibbon "stunning," was not a literary man, and had he heard that Horace Walpole called Topham's

book "one of the most amusing anecdotal books in the English language," he would not have been impressed. In fact, Elwes is capital reading, while Dancer and his like come near to being deplorably dull.

Cooke may have been an illustrious miser, but he was a commonplace brute, and the only pleasant thing about him was the way in which on his deathbed he rated his doctor.

"Why, sir," he cried, "you are no better than a pickpocket, to go to rob me of my money by sending two draughts a day to a man whom all your physic won't keep for more than six days alive."

We may feel drawn for a moment towards the Rev. Mr Jones, who was the curate of Blewbury for forty-three years, during the whole of which he wore the same hat and coat, and saved his entire stipend of £50 a year. He was a perfectly harmless old gentleman, and spontaneously paid a poor woman fourpence every three months for washing his one shirt. He had a disarming weakness for good ale when he could get it for nothing, and was a liberal subscriber to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews.

There is a touch of romance about "Dollar Richards," the Cornish wrecker who found Spanish dollars buried on the shore, and Miser Roberts, who began life as a smuggler and became a maker of Æolian harps. There was a downright independent spirit in Francis Trehan, the Somerset miser, who, when told he should be thankful for his fortune, replied, "I don't know nothing about Providence in the matter; I only know that Jenny and I worked hard and got it all."

But these and others of their kind lacked their *vates sacer*, whereas Topham painted of Elwes a very vivid and human picture. Topham's usual profession was that of scarifying well-known personages in an outrageous paper called 'The World.' He wrote witty prologues to plays, had held a commission in the Horse Guards, was the lover of the beautiful Mrs Wells the actress, and was, in short, a smart and dashing character. The bond between him and Elwes must have been a curious one. Perhaps Topham came to scoff, and remained to drop into a wondering and half-contemptuous friendship. It was not Elwes' money that attracted him: he refused his proffered loans, and induced him to make a proper and decent will in favour of his sons. He realised, of course, that Elwes was good "copy," for he told him that some day he should write his Life, to which Elwes answered, "There is nothing in it, sir, worth mentioning." But clearly he had a genuine kindness for the pitiful old gentleman, and because he was fond of him, he has made him for us hardly ever repellent, often likeable, and sometimes touching.

I said that Elwes could not

on his own merits claim to be the greatest of misers, and in his own family there was at least one to surpass him, his uncle, Sir Harvey, from whom he inherited the bulk of his fortune. John Elwes was born John Meggot, the son of "an eminent brewer," but his mother was an Elwes, and there was saving in the blood, for she was left £100,000 by her husband, and starved herself to death. The boy went to Westminster, where he is said to have become a good scholar, though he never afterwards opened a book. Thence he went to Geneva, and then, having already plenty of money, he plunged into a gay life in London. He had a passion for play, and once played for so long at a sitting that he and his companions were knee-deep in cards. Thus early, however, he gave a foretaste of other qualities, for he would get up from the card-table in the early morning, walk to Smithfield Market to meet his cattle coming in from Thaydon, and drive his own bargain with the butchers. At cards he lost a good deal of money, not because he was unlucky or unskilful, but because he paid his debts—he was always punctiliously honest — and other people did not.

This part of his life was probably unknown to Sir Harvey Elwes, whom he cultivated assiduously by visiting him at his house in Suffolk. In those days he had a healthy appetite which he had not yet learned to subdue, and dressed fashionably; but as this would not do for his uncle, he used to stop at an inn on his way to Stoke, have one last good meal, and don old clothes and rusty shoe-buckles. Then he rode on to Stoke to find Sir Harvey in a fireless room, walking up and down to keep warm, and proposing shortly to go to bed in order to save candles.

Sir Harvey did not approve of new clothes: why should he when his spendthrift predecessor, Sir Gervase, had left a chest full of faded fineries, to which, when his coat would no longer hold together, he could have recourse? As for food, he was an expert partridge-setter, and there were at Stoke plenty of partridges, so why eat anything more? His dutiful nephew when on a visit would always accompany him on his partridge-setting expeditions.

The old gentleman had inherited the estate much embarrassed; he had vowed to restore the family fortunes, and in doing so found an eminently satisfying form of martyrdom. He had no tastes or desires of any kind with which to wrestle. He did not want to play or hunt like his nephew Jack; he liked nothing but his partridge-setting. His one dissipation was an occasional meeting at a club-room in the village with two neighbouring baronets, and they seldom parted without an argument over the reckoning. The

only way in which he ever lost money was by being robbed, and, having lost his guineas, he steadfastly refused to lose his time also by identifying the robbers. This mode of life suited him so well that though he had been consumptive in his youth, he lived till he was between eighty and ninety years old, and kept his nephew waiting long for dead men's shoes.

John Elwes, as he now became, was over forty when he began to reign. With his change of name seemed to come a change of character. "Jack Meggot" has something of a dashing sound, but John Elwes put away dashing things. He played no more; he kept the barest establishment at Stoke, and utterly refused to repair the house. He began to find Sir Gervase's chest very useful, and was known to array himself in an old dress-coat of green velvet with slash sleeves, while on his head he wore a wig that he had picked out of a wet rut on the road. One extravagance he allowed himself, and it was one that must have redeemed him in his neighbours' eyes: this was a pack of foxhounds, and he was declared by good judges to be one of the finest horsemen in England. To be sure, his hounds only cost him £300 a year, and the huntsman, who was Jack-of-all-trades at Stoke, led a hard life, only to be called an idle dog, who wanted to be paid to do nothing. Some wag among the Suffolk squires declared that Mr Elwes' hounds must needs kill, or they would have nothing to eat.

Put John Elwes on a horse and he seems to have been as happy as it was in his nature to be, for at least he was travelling at no expense, save for the scandalous demands of those sharks, the turnpike-keepers. He was once riding with a friend near Newmarket, and came to the turnpike by the Devil's Dyke. The night was pitch dark, and the sides of the dyke precipitous, but he insisted on riding over it, and his friend weakly followed him. When, after one of the horses had fallen, they had at length scrambled down upon the farther side, the friend thanked God for their escape. "Ay," said Elwes, "very right; never pay a turnpike if you can avoid it." It was on this same journey that he excused the slowness of his pace on the ground that he was letting his horse feed on some hay hanging from the hedge. "It is nice hay," he explained simply, "and you have it for nothing." That his neighbours should have his hay for nothing was quite a different matter, and when they came to call on him, and their horses were put up in his stables, he would steal in and place the hay safely out of their reach. After all, he probably thought, a horse could not want much hay when all he wanted himself for a sixty-mile ride was two hard-boiled eggs in his

pocket to eat by the roadside. Why should a horse grow weary? He was never weary, and to do him justice, so long as he need spend no money, he would as soon try to tire himself for other people's sake as his own. Two elderly ladies in his neighbourhood were in some mysterious danger of being excommunicated, which put them in a sad flutter. Elwes at once put his two eggs in his pocket, mounted his horse, and rode all through the night to London to convey their submission to the spiritual court.

We may be sure that he received their thanks with a kind of humble courtesy that belonged to him. The one little joke recorded of him is a polite one. An unskilful friend out shooting lodged two pellets in his face.

"My dear sir," said Elwes, "I give you joy on your improvement. I knew you would hit something by-and-by."

He was always apologetic for getting in the way, even of pellets; and it was characteristic of him that when over seventy he said he was as young as ever: he could walk, he could ride, and he could dance—and he hoped he should give no trouble even when he was old.

He was always, in Topham's words, "so gentle, so attentive, so gentlemanly, so engaging," and also, I feel disposed to add, in some ways so pathetically stupid. He had no notion of accounts, and could never have known how his affairs stood. He believed in nothing but saving, and yet could not resist the wildest speculations. Offer him a higher percentage than that of the funds, and it was too much for him: he would listen to any impostor with any fantastic scheme, and his guineas went clinking gaily into parts of the world that he had never heard of before. Five-and-twenty thousand of them he lost at one fell swoop in some mythical iron-works in America, and this at last sobered his passion for investment, but not before he had lost all told about £150,000. Yet nearer home, where he could see what the guineas were doing, he seems to have lacked neither sense nor energy. He had inherited some London property and built upon it. Portland Place, Portman Square, and a great part of Marylebone owe their existence to him. His houses were an agony to him whenever he thought of fire, for he was his own insurer; but they brought him stealthy ecstasies of joy whenever he wanted to stay in London, for there was sure to be one of them empty, and in it he could sleep for nothing. If a tenant offered, he moved somewhere else, to a barn or an outhouse, and with him went a faithful old charwoman who looked after his simple wants. Thus to know he was in London was one thing, to find him quite another. Once after diligent inquiries his nephew heard

that a poor-looking man had been seen skulking through a stable door in Great Marlborough Street. The stable door was broken open, and Elwes was found speechless and almost at the point of death. Next door was the old woman, stark and stiff: she had been dead two days.

This was probably one of the very few occasions on which he was attended by a doctor, merely because he was too ill to resist. Otherwise the apothecary was to be classed with the turnpike-keeper. Severely kicked by a horse, he once, in his younger days, went through with the hunt with his leg cut to the bone, and only yielded when amputation was threatened. Jack Mytton might have done the same thing out of gasconade, "for the honour of Shropshire," and would have taken care that people knew it. Jack Meggot did it out of loyalty to his own pocket, and wanted no applause.

It was these legs of his that many years afterwards gave him a real triumph over the medical profession. He was walking home in London one dark night, ran into a sedan-chair, and cut himself badly. The hated apothecary was sent for and pulled a long face.

"Mr ——," said Elwes, "I have this one thing to say to you. In my opinion my legs are not much hurt. Now you think they are, so I will make this agreement. I will take one leg and you shall take the other; you shall do what you please with yours, and I will do nothing with mine, and I will wager your bill that my leg gets well first." And so it did: it won with a fortnight to spare.

These London adventures belong to his later life. When he was sixty years old, some whimsical fancy moved him to become a Member of Parliament for Berkshire. There must have been an odd strand of vanity in his patchwork of qualities, for though he had apparently little interest in politics, it pleased him to be an M.P. Yet he was in an agony of terror when it was rumoured that Lord North meant to make him a peer. He had only courted his constituency to the extent of eighteenpence, the price of dining once at the ordinary at Abingdon, whereas a lord must keep a carriage. Topham protests almost too much as to his integrity and independence in Parliament. Party leaders did indeed complain bitterly that he could not be relied on, but it is hard to say whether the eccentricity of his voting sprang from a sense of duty or from caprice. He sat for thirteen years, and then it appeared that he must disgorge perhaps as much as £300 to keep his seat. He instantly resigned, though he continued to hang about his old resort of the Mount Coffee House, where fuel and light cost him nothing. It was there that quite suddenly the old lust for play overtook him for a single night,

and he lost some £3000 at piquet.

Though he had not spent a farthing on the free and independent electors of Berkshire, his seat cost him dear, for his fellow-members fastened on him like so many harpies to borrow his money, and it was one of his principles that you "could not ask a gentleman for money." Was it the old taste for speculation in another form that made him so easy a prey, or was it that curious vanity of the miser that hugs to itself the knowledge of being able to buy up other men? The end of his money-lending career was of a piece with the rest of his contradictory life.

"Pray, sir," he said one day to Topham, "would you wish to borrow a sum of money? It is very much at your service if you choose it."

The refusal of his offer astonished him beyond measure.

"Well, now," he said, "I will never lend any money again"; and he never did.

When he left Parliament, Elwes was an old man, too old to find any new interests or mode of life, and his health and his intellect alike broke down. He had hitherto been afraid of spending his money; now he was beset with the fear that he had lost it. He was at last induced to make a will, leaving all his unsettled property to his two natural sons, the only two luxuries he had ever allowed himself, and the two persons in the world of whom he was as fond as it was possible for him to be fond of any one. He went to live for some months in solitude at Stoke, and true to the type of old Sir Harvey, went to bed when it was dusk to save a candle. Thence he went to Thaydon, and afterwards for a while to London. Finally, he wanted to see Marcham again, but he had no horses left, and could not bear to face the expense of a post-chaise. The obliging Mr Partis volunteered to drive him there in his carriage, and he had the satisfaction of making his last journey on earth for nothing. Soon after arriving at Marcham he collapsed utterly, and on the 26th of November 1789 he died. His last words to his son George were that he hoped he had left him what he wished.

At the end of one of the books in which I have been reading about him, some earlier reader has been testing the wonders of multiplication. With a stump of a pencil he began by setting down one pound, then multiplied it by two, and so on through four, eight, and sixteen, till in an incredibly small space of paper the sum reached millions and tens of millions. It might have soothed old Elwes' fretted spirit to know that his example would bear even so much fruit as this. Poor, forlorn, polite old gentleman!

BÉBÉ.

BÉBÉ was much petted, was exempt from scoldings, spankings, and compulsory exertions, and would have had no wish to change places with any healthy, hearty, little Britisher. Nevertheless, my English mind sees him as a tragedy, a monarch despoiled of his possessions —robbed of the crown of innocent joy set with jewels of fancy, a heritage due to every child born into the world, whether in the East or the West, in a palace or a slum. How long ago it was that he lost it I did not know. . . . It was a boast of his mother that before he was three he ate ices, sat at table d'hôte, and was an old hand at hotel life; possibly it was before that advanced age of three that his crown was exchanged for one of memory only. As a proof of his having reigned once over the Kingdom of Child-Land and Make-Believe, this eight-year-old *bon viveur* (he had now cultivated a proper taste for caviare, foie gras, champagne, and strong coffee) was still called "Bébé" —cruel irony, reminding one of the mocking formality in the title, "Your Majesty," and "the Emperor," given out of courtesy at St Helena.

Our mutual intercourse was begun at the Carlton Hotel, London, a *tête-à-tête* dinner, followed by an entertainment at the Coliseum. A small slight infant, not bigger than an average six years; a rather large head, waxen face, dark hair and sombre dark eyes, set off by a white silk blouse; tiny sensitive hands; thin compressed lips; and a voice that had a singular lack of inflection. His varied and cosmopolitan experiences no doubt enabled him to make mental notes upon *me*, with greater accuracy and perhaps equal interest. The one clear impression I first gathered was of a small being overburdened with mundane responsibility, resigned but anxious, nervous under an exterior of sang-froid. It was swiftly borne in upon me that his habits were advanced and his mentality developed, for, at my suggestion of a little soup and some chicken, he piped: "Mais! il y a du rôti?" and awoke my dull mind to the fact that he was prepared for and accustomed to a full-course dinner every evening of his life. I imagine that he sized me up as somewhat lacking in *savoir-faire*, though fairly intelligent.

The first gleam of real interest I saw in his eye was on learning the word "pepper" in English. "Tiens! ça c'est curieux!" . . . and he proceeded to explain that it was a similar word in Roumanian, although that was a language largely derived from Latin, and English was not (if he understood

rightly?) a Latin language. In this highly-intellectual discussion his face lighted up, and I saw that he could smile—in a fashion: a tight little guarded smile that was more like amused wisdom than gladness of youth.

A first visit to England gave him no excitement, and the Coliseum entertainment of that evening left him as it found him—bored. It was a question of indifference to him whether we should leave before the end or sit it out. I had yet to learn that he was well used to sitting up in semi-sleepy state hour after hour; I had not then seen him, as later in Bucharest, regarding without a glimmer of eagerness the names of plays, operas, and cinema-shows, choosing which one he preferred to see—that is, which he guessed least likely to weary him to excess. I had not yet seen him at the dinner-table at his home, his sleepy head dropping in jerks over his plate, his mind too dull for speech or observation, mortified but obstinate, an object of laughter, but struggling to maintain dignity at a delayed prolonged dinner that lasted till nine o'clock and after. I was yet to see him battling with weariness at later festivities, hopefully declaring that "when he had had enough champagne he would be lively."

Bébé, at eight, knew from personal experience some sordid phases of life, from contact with which he bore the scars, and, to his honour be it said, bore them nobly. He had known real poverty—poverty that stung, that brought tangible suffering, feelable shame. And small wonder that a tale his mother quoted was true, and true to his character. When his second step-father was a suitor, she consulted Bébé, aged six.

"He wants to marry us: shall we say yes?"

Bébé: "Is he rich?"

Mother: "Very rich."

Bébé: "Well, then—yes—let us marry him!"

And now he knew this second experience—too much money: money spent lavishly, with oriental ostentation, with that lack of balance that so often characterises the spending of wealth quickly accumulated.

Bébé had clothes galore, toys galore, but no small friends; he had a series of French "gouvernantes" and peasant servants to wait on him, ever changing and never peaceful, never contented. The atmosphere around him was one of artificial luxury without regular creature comforts: numerous servants continually changed exhibited a perpetual discontent, strife, idleness, and unwilling service towards the whole household. French nurses or governesses who undertook the charge of Bébé quickly deserted their posts, leaving in their trail a flavour of discord and failure. In a confusion of gossip, quarrellings, and petty spites, Bébé kept a steady head and a silent tongue. "C'est

toujours comme ça!" was his comment, with a shrug, and an expression containing both spleen and resignation.

His country home was a brand-new palatial residence resembling a hotel; he had no garden to play in, no pets to cherish, no companionable and comforting Nanny, no companions of his own age, and no special corner to call his own. He treated with care the brocaded or polished furniture and his mother's grand gowns; he never threw balls nor invented adventures, never made any noise, and seldom soiled his hands.

His outings in this place were in the small public gardens, where he walked sedately, conscious but not proud of the fact that they were the gift of his step-father to the little provincial town. So were the swimming-baths in which he had never been, because they were "for the poor." He could have what he liked, and to the bounty of his step-father were added patience, good-nature, and gentleness to him. But when I once used the word "kind," Bébé's face took an expression of cynicism, of spleen: he was sceptical concerning that kindness.

"He is rich; he can afford things; he has much money—gifts cost him nothing!" It was not for me to introduce the idea of gratitude: "platitude" were perhaps a more fitting word for such moralising. *The child knew.* Presents were given—not affection; justice was dealt out—not tenderness; gentleness came of pity—not love. And it was true; "it cost nothing." Bébé knew these things; his mind had premature knowledge of proportion; he had no use for pretence.

Bébé was an experienced traveller; travel to him meant much packing, during which persons ordinarily amiable grew irritable and angry; much bustle, a sensation which troubled and distressed his love of quiet; many disturbed sleeps at odd times in strange places—short respites, during which he could never have his sleep out in peace, but was for ever being flung, with heavy head and weary eyes, into fresh bustle and renewed vexations. His companions were continually engrossed in agitating cries concerning luggage, money, and discussion about the next halting-place. Bébé was entirely adaptable, amenable and unexcited; by dint of repetition of these turmoils he had become indifferent, and was no longer surprised at anything.

Splendour and wealth, if they did not bring him joys, brought him substitutes. He had a certain satisfaction in the existence and attendance of "menials," in the knowledge of definite sums spent and prices attached to objects around him. Who knows? Perhaps the loss of the real Child Crown was in some sort filled by the rôle of dummy Prince in a kingdom of world-

lings where his Queen Mother swayed the rule. At least the sense of security was assured him to his comfort: he had something solid now at the back of him, and was no longer flotsam on a stormy ocean of life. Two anchors he trusted, or as nearly trusted as his nature and previous shocks of experience would allow—"maman" and money. Maman was his and he was hers, where she was he would be, what she had he would partake of. That did not mean that he had much of her: she never played with him, she had no knowledge of the details of his studies, though lessons, to this un-babyish Bébé, were his chief source of amusement and zest. He had to take her love on faith, and he had to accept as an accomplished fact this step-father who came first with maman; his former step-father had been less "first" to maman and a more intimate "second" to Bébé, whom he had adopted as a friend.

Marriage had at no time in his mind represented a lasting tie: since maman had had three husbands, they were obviously creatures to come and go, to provide houses and means *pro tem.*: if one of them failed, maman could have another. And money was a strong anchor, preventing one from feeling lost or buffeted or despised. Then there was religion—God, something else real and tangible to Bébé. Respecting God he had complete faith; towards his orthodox Church genuine reverence; concerning his own personal heart and conscience, reticence—a bed-rock of reticence.

Having dipped into grim realities so early in life, his trust in Providence was firmer than his trust in humanity, his conscience was more alive than his heart. He had gained, as an onlooker, the philosophy more to be expected at eighty than at eight, and one could but devoutly hope that by a merciful Providence he would grow younger with advancing years.

This would certainly not be brought about by the guidance of maman, who in all seriousness wished him to go to a play of Ibsen, in order to "improve his education," and because he was "old enough and intelligent enough to understand Ibsen." Only Heaven and Bébé—and possibly maman, whose mental ability he inherited—knew whether this amazing statement were true! Only the priest, at half-yearly confessions, knew anything of this infant soul, again excepting maman, who had no qualms concerning it. If suffering obtains mercy, if fortitude acquires merit, Bébé had a better right to absolution than most people; and it must have been hard to find confession of neglected duties, for no one could have had an easier conscience on that score than Bébé. He could be obstinate, but that was when the motive was a sense of duty, a point of honour, or adhering to his loyalties. He would, for instance, tell deliberate lies, but not of his

own invention—only those dictated to him by maman for diplomatic purposes. He would naïvely answer with truth, but often maman was annoyed, and bade him reply with more intelligence the next time, holding the oriental code that truth in speech is only fitting when serviceable. So he thought out a rule of conduct for himself, truthfulness being natural to him, and annoying maman his chief fear, and he once gave it utterance in the following precise motto: "Always tell the truth except when your mother bids you tell a lie." To this code he adhered strictly.

He had come into contact with strange churches and creeds, customs, and habits of thought. They did not puzzle nor disturb him; they were interesting or curious to him from an abstract point of view. He collected facts without being at all astonished. Roman Catholics crossed themselves not as he of the Orthodox Church, reversing the direction of the gesture; Protestants neglected this, and many other symbolic signs; his native peasants displayed variations of signs and symbols at all hours and in all places, the more primitive the peasant the more frequent the signs. An equally worshipful attitude behoved them towards maman and masters; he, Bébé himself, received admiring homage from the children in humbler grades of life.

Once in a Bucharest street a small gipsy girl begged alms, and Bébé, seeking a penny, inadvertently dropped his purse and its contents upon the pavement. At the sight of a stream of silver coins the gipsy child became frenzied; she evoked blessings, she predicted fortune, she kissed his hands, she prostrated herself before him, touching the ground with her forehead. For many days he was forced to flee this child and her relatives, who dogged his path and pursued him with tongues flowing with benedictions and a zealous desire to kiss his garments, by numerous modes of cajoling and prayers, crying, "Give! Give!"

At another time this distinction formed by wealth was accentuated by other than servile demonstrations. He was in the woody paths of an unfrequented mountain district, and was reviled and provoked by a group of little peasants in hooligan mood, who, for no other reason than the obvious decorum of his clothes and demeanour, set upon him with taunts and derision, followed by the throwing of stones. Bébé was first indignant, then frightened; he knew that if stone-throwing began, it was no joke, and he wisely refrained from either the folly of fight or the cowardliness of flight. He went through the ordeal, white but defiant, giving retort in a rather unsteady voice, and refraining from the indignity of running. Bébé accepted this difference, this barrier between himself and the "lower orders," as a law of the powers that be. He was not for criticising any differences of sect and custom; he merely observed them with

curiosity, and was surprised at nothing, shocked at nothing, but most conventional in his own observances, which were few.

It amused him vastly that a fortune-teller had once predicted that he would some day become a priest. "I hope you will be a cleaner one than that priest," I remarked one day, with no intention of profanity, when an exceptionally dirty and ill-kempt specimen had passed us. Bébé regarded me seriously, and raised his eyebrows slightly. "You mock at God?" he asked, as if for information.

When cholera or any serious epidemic was rife, it was a point of interest, and, I fancy, of satisfaction to him to state to individuals not of his Church that they could not be buried in orthodox consecrated ground. Whether this was a warning, a reminder of inferiority, or his innate pleasure in informative facts, one did not gather.

Study and learning of all kinds were acceptable to him so long as his bodily strength held out. His brain had the faculty of memorising developed to an extraordinary degree. In learning a fresh language no word was forgotten when once read or written. Unlike almost all children, he learned languages not by hearing and speaking, but by conscious study; the toughest part for him was the part so usually no effort for children—imitation. This idiosyncrasy was a natural outcome of a definite trait or defect; he was as nearly tone-deaf as is possible with otherwise normal hearing. His voice might have led one to surmise that, and his complete lack of response to street music, brass bands, orchestras, or songs. Possibly his senses might have thrilled to the tom-tom, but melody and rhythm in no degree penetrated.

Curiously enough, this fact was discovered only when Bébé was already considered a promising pianist. Having no piano in the country home, he began his study of music by theory only; his intelligence took delight in learning—as prelude to future musical practice—notes, terms, elementary rules of time and harmony. These he drank in eagerly, as it might be mathematics, with easy speed and exactitude, giving his usual concentrated attention and half-amused interest. By the time he made the acquaintance of a piano, he could read music, and as his hands were sensitive and his memory keen, he very soon gave excellent performances in the way of short pieces, duets, dictations, and playing at sight. But of his répertoire Bébé could recognise not one piece, not one line, not the very tuniest of tunes, when played or sung to him. His ear never developed any further, though in tests he acquired a number of what he termed "tricks." He would count the notes or watch the hands, and by detailed memorising of length of notes and rests, he could sometimes make a correct deduction. But however simple and catchy the tune he

played often by memory, it was never familiar to him if played an octave higher, or with a fresh bass, even if he had left the piano-stool but an instant after playing it himself. Listeners were very loath to believe any lack of ear in him, for his obedience, his intelligence, and his supple fingers enabled him to give modulation which was pleasant to the ears of others. If, however, his fingers made a slip at the start, he would continue contentedly to the end of the piece, scale or exercise, treble or bass, all one note too high or too low, like a locomotive off its track, unable to right itself, but its machinery working serenely. The dismal discords thus created were precisely the same to his ear; and if he had any real preference, I fancy he would have given it to discord rather than harmony.

Bébé had to pass his Roumanian school examination, and it is almost needless to say that he passed it with distinction but for one feature: it was obligatory to sing the National Anthem, and for that he had to have special exemption. Before coming to that obvious conclusion his master had tried hard to instil into him the air, pupil being as anxious as master to achieve the feat. The stout little man, red in the face with energy and goodwill, would beat time, stamp his feet, sing loud, sing soft, while Bébé gravely regarded him. He could easily have learned the notes on paper, and made a faultless copy from memory; he no doubt could have copied, too, the pantomime of the excited and perspiring little professor, but was too polite. His copy of the notes of his voice was a series of weird shrill articulations which left master and child discomforted and embarrassed. The trial was a comical farce, from an outsider's point of view.

It was a pity that Bébé himself could not enjoy the farce, for real undiluted farce was his greatest relaxation. It was truly refreshing to see this little old man of a small boy enjoy a circus clown. One heartily wished there were more of the clown in a circus and more circuses in the year, for that form of humour was surely a healthy and rejuvenating one, balancing his painful precocity. The clown made Bébé beside himself with laughter; he did not shout, but he squealed with laughter; he laughed till he was breathless, he laughed till the tears came, he laughed till he was limp and exhausted.

And lesser buffoonery delighted him always if it was of the fun and humour in the category of clowning. It was a useful bit of knowledge, this: to perch a pen-wiper on one's head, to hide an object and produce it unexpectedly—this made Bébé chortle. It was a thousand pities that a private conjurer was not of the household's luxuries; that would indeed have been an asset to the boy who could not be gay, must not be noisy, would not play boys' games, and so sadly needed relaxation of mind. It

would have been a kindness if some one had worn a dunce's cap or reddened his nose for dinner, and so rewarded Bébé's long and hungry waiting more adequately than with caviare and rich entrées.

For a short time a source of amusement to him was a Borzoi dog, bought as an additional expensive ornament to the establishment, valued only on account of the high price paid for him. Nobody loved him, and he loved nobody; he had no training, and consequently soon became unmanageable and dangerous, and was sent away. When he was excited he performed all sorts of serpentine exercises and freakish gambols, and these antics made Bébé split his sides.

The peasants never got used to this exotic animal, the breed being unknown in those parts, and they persisted in considering him a half-starved creature on account of his shape, and would offer him food and throw crusts at him. Their obstinate opinion, and his mode of saying "thank you"—that is, of making fools of them, tickled Bébé's sense of humour mightily. The dog would take the crust in his mouth gingerly, bound with it into the middle of the road, and there execute a series of leaps, curves, and juggling tricks, throwing the crust high in the air, placing it on the ground and darting at it, rushing round it with a show of ecstatic enthusiasm, and at times leaping right over Bébé's head. An increasing group of peasants looked on with awe, never smiling, never certain whether the weird shadowy snake of a so-called dog were not some unholy creature with magic properties. Their solemnity and their pity for it as starved or mad was the cream of the joke to Bébé.

Bébé had one local chum, a young man of five-and-twenty, half Russian, half Serb, tall and graceful, hearty of voice, keen of wit. Among the visitors who petted, teased, or made comments on Bébé, he alone really understood and befriended him; he had an encouraging and cheering personality, and was neither condescending nor critical. He talked to him on an equality, of travel or of stamp-collecting, giving him his own album with many good ones; he told him funny tales that were intelligent and entertaining, and he could speak many languages with a degree of eloquence and inaccuracy that was amazing to the ignorant and amusing to the learned. He probably had a fellow-feeling for Bébé, for he also was lonely, was intelligent beyond the average and out of his natural element; he would have suffered also from *ennui*, but, unlike his small friend, he had a wonderful source of enthusiasm and good spirits when in company, and a friendly soul that made for geniality with the passers-by. He was a democrat, too, and on excellent terms with the juvenile ragtag and bobtail of the public gardens, where he fraternised with infants from the perambulator

age and upwards. This extremely simple form of gaiety he indulged in to keep up his spirits when sunk low from lack of society and scope, and he found a reward which he expressed: "When I walk through the gardens, the children there they all knows me!" in a tone of real triumph.

Something from this cheery presence always effected a change for the better in Bébé; they never bored each other in talk, and when he was at the dinner-table it was sure to be lively; they seemed to meet on common ground—he so like a child in heart, and the child so mature for his few years. It is said that the Russian feels every man his brother, and there was something touching in the sight of this big fellow of versatile gifts, spontaneous gestures, and advanced culture of intellect recognising a brother in the small frail scrap of humanity, and never making a blunder in his advances. For to most people Bébé was unresponsive and unlovable; he retired quickly into his impenetrable shell when they questioned him, and was even thought dull, so little interest did their conversation or their manners arouse in him. They either petted or catechised him, and one mode offended his intelligence, the other his natural reticence. He never spoke of his sentiments, and signs of affection were of so subtle and concealed a quality that one almost doubted their existence.

I myself had the favour of his friendship and trust, and considered the compliment no small one. My last sight of him was seated on the box-seat of the departing carriage, from which his pale little face showed an expression of spiritless dejection. It was good-bye for ever in all probability, but his parting was a toneless *bon jour* no more, and his face wore the look of *c'est toujours comme ça!* But I think he would have had a qualm of real regret had the prevailing cholera deposited me in the portion of the cemetery unconsecrated by his Church.

I received a series of quaint letters from him which told me that his remembrance of our friendship was a sweet one, and that his memory would keep it intact. He wrote at some length of the details of his daily programme, and included some philosophic wisdom. "Mamma scolds me always that I am not enough gentleman," he wrote. And also that, "It is always nicer the little girls than boys. Mamma says that boys are nice only when they become men with ladyes." Poor pathetic little being! If I could have lifted the veil and peeped into his future, I think I should have turned coward and covered my eyes, dreading to see a still more pitiful figure. May life have been kinder to him than my imaginings could foretell, and may it never rob him of at least one love, one trust, and one friendship worthy of the loyalty that was his most valuable possession.

MAY ORTON.

THE "FIDALGO" IN THE EAST.

BY DAVID HANNAY.

It may be truly said of the Portuguese "Fidalgo" ("hidalgo" in Castilian, "noble" in French, "Adel" in German, and, in the right English, "gentleman") that he was "Primus in Indis." He was the first European who came to India and the Far East as armed intruder to conquer, and to remain as master. The European had not been unknown, nor even unwelcome, on the great trade route of the East from the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Straits of Ormuz, along the coast of Malabar, onward to the Straits of Malacca, and through that gate of the sea or the side-door at the Straits of Sunda, to China and Japan. From the time of the Ptolemies in Egypt—that is, from the time when the venturesome Greek noted that whoever sailed east before the wind of Hippalus, which we more prosaically name the South-West Monsoon, could right easily make his direct way to the Gulf of Cambaya and to Malabar, and being there, had but to wait for the change of seasons to be blown back by the trade-wind from the north-east—remote Asia had known the wandering seamen, merchants, and missionaries, Nestorian or Orthodox, of Europe, with a few artisans, and here or there a soldier of fortune among them. Nobody was afraid of them. They were harmless and profitable guests. It was far otherwise with the "Fidalgo."

Because of all he did during a century of far-reaching activity, he stamped a picture of himself on the Asiatic memory which some authorities incline to think has never been effaced. He inspired a horror, a dread, a loathing which have been transferred to other Europeans. Perhaps there is exaggeration here, and the Asiatic, however tenacious he may be of recollections of wrong, has not nursed this grudge for four hundred years and more. For the other European peoples the Portuguese showed the way, and set an example which is a warning. The "Fidalgos" were the leaders and must bear the blame, while they take the honour of the achievement. They deserve at least not to be forgotten, and it is neither uninteresting nor useless to see them as they were.

In the first place, we have to settle the question, What exactly was a "Fidalgo"? In modern Portuguese, the name has come to be no more than our "Esq." on an envelope, a mere flourish of civility. In mediæval Portugal, the Fidalgos formed a military caste, largely of French, or, to be more exact, of Burgundian origin. The Order of Cluny promoted pilgrimages to the

shrine of Saint James of Galicia, crusades into Spain, and royal marriages with Castile. When Constance of Burgundy married Alfonso VI. of Castile and Leon, towards the end of the eleventh century, her brother Henry came with her to her husband's recent conquest, Toledo. He was a younger son with his fortune to make, and he won it by marriage with one of the many natural daughters of his brother-in-law. Teresa brought with her as dower the county of Porto, or Northern Portugal, then counted as an extension of Galicia. How the county of Porto grew into the kingdom of Portugal is a longer story than we are called on to tell now. For our purpose it is enough to remember that this Henry of Burgundy, and his son Alfonso Enriquez (Henry-son), and their successors, conquered from the beginning, and from Islam, by the aid of Burgundian crusaders. There were many manors in Burgundy, and they swarmed with younger sons, tall fellows, and good men of their hands. For Jock the Laird's brither the choice was between going into a convent, where he was to be turned into a bad monk, or to take his younger brother's small portion, invest it in a hauberk and weapons, and make his way by the pilgrim route across the Pyrenees, and through Leon, to the Count of Porto, or King of Portugal, who had a permanent need for effective fighting men. Once taken on as man-at-arms, he had a fair prospect of winning a grant of land. With good fortune he might become a "Lord of Vassals" and great baron. If his luck was but ordinary, he could at least conquer a manor or so and found a family of gentle birth. And they and their like were the Fidalgos of Portugal, who imposed themselves upon, who governed, looked down on, and led the "brown people," the "gente morena," to take the Castilian term. They formed two castes, the ruling and the ruled, into which the Portuguese nation was divided. While their day lasted they went first by right of greater physical strength, or hardier spirit, their inborn belief that it was for them to command, and for the non-fidalgo to obey. War was the business of those of gentle birth. To take from the unbeliever was to win for the true faith. "Payens ont tort, Chrétiens ont bon droit," was the maxim by which they firmly held. To be a Christian was to have a lawful claim to take from "the pagan," who was represented to them by the Mahometan.

The doctrine was not invented by the Portuguese Fidalgos. There were Englishmen, learned counsel, too, who laid it down with every appearance of conviction when they were speaking gravely on a very serious occasion. Mr Holt—Sir John Holt, Lord Chief-Justice after 1689—was one. He was of counsel for the Company in the "Great Case of Monopolies between the East India Company, plaintiffs, and

Thomas Sandys, defendant; whether their Patent for Trading to the East Indies, exclusive of all others, is good." It dragged along in 1684-85. At that late day, so sane and reasonable a man as Holt could argue solemnly that all infidels are enemies of all Christians, and that you must not trade with enemies, without express licence from the king. Infidels are excluded from benefit of law. You may beat a heathen, and plead his heathenism in abatement of action. "The profession and preservation of Christianity is of so high a nature that of itself it supersedes all law; if any law be made against any point of the Christian religion that law is *ipso facto* void." It is true that Sandys' counsel disputed Mr Holt's law, and derided his doctrine as being "a conceit, absurd, monkish, fantastical, and fanatical." Sir George Treby chaffed his "divinity," and even pointed out to him, with some truth and a dash of humour, that he was in danger of falling into the heresy of the Lollards —to wit, that *Dominium fundatur in gratia*. The counsel, in fact, sparred away, saying what seemed best adapted to serve the interests of their respective clients. We need not assume that Holt believed a word of what he said. He took quite another view when, as Lord Chief-Justice, he came to preside at the trial of the pirates a few years later. But the point is that he thought it worth while to propound his "monkish conceit" when he was addressing the Lord Chief-Justice of the day, Jeffreys, in the Great Case of Monopolies. He cannot have thought that he would do himself credit or help his clients by talking what all men would see at once to be arrant nonsense. In truth, many men did agree with him. One of the pirates he tried defended himself by saying that he had never heard there was any sin in robbing heathens.

The Fidalgos to a man agreed with that pirate. The doctrine *Dominium fundatur in gratia* was a horrible heresy when it was pleaded for the purpose of showing that kings, nobles, squires, and priests who live in sin may justly be dispossessed. It was quite orthodox when quoted as an excuse for overthrowing, butchering, and plundering "pagans." When first they sailed to the East with Vasco da Gama in 1597, the Portuguese of all classes, including the learned, were ill informed as to what was pagan and what was Christian in those little-known regions. All had heard of Prester John and his realm in the vaguely-defined Indies. It was well known to them that there were Mahometans there who had conquered far and wide. From these uncertain premises they drew the hazardous deduction that whatever was not Mahometan east of the Cape of Good Hope was Christian. The first comers had no scruple in worshipping before idols of of a Hindu goddess shown in the

act of nursing an infant divinity. They assumed that what they saw was really the Virgin and Child. A few, indeed, had their quiet doubts. One Fidalgo in Vasco da Gama's band was heard to mutter, "If these are idols, I worship the mother of God." Then, sure of the orthodox direction of his intentions, he plumped down on his knees and said his prayers with the others in a Hindu temple. They learnt better before long. But through all their century of power in the East they found it far easier to live in harmony with the Hindu than with the Mahometan. Sultans of Bijapur or Guzerat were their natural enemies. But they sought the alliance of the Hindu rajahs, whether little coast rajahs of Cochin or the rulers of the great southern Hindu kingdom of Visayanagara. Zain-al-Din, author of the 'Tohfut-ul-Mujahideen, which recounts the sins of the "Frank" invaders of the Malabar coast, goes so far as to say that they did not persecute the Hindu, but only the Mahometan. He was wrong. After the Inquisition was established at Goa in 1560, Hindus were driven into that "house of darkness and stench." The words are Zain-al-Din's, but the Frenchman Dellon, who was imprisoned there, would have agreed with him. Yet in early times the Portuguese did habitually spare the Hindu, while they made a rule of massacring the Mahometans. They felt, and had good cause to feel, that a disaster had befallen them, when the Sultans of Bijapur, Ahmednuggar, and Golconda destroyed the Ram Rajah of Visayanagara and his kingdom at the battle of Talikoot in 1565.

There was more behind the Fidalgo's hatred of Islam than the traditions of centuries of war with Almoravides, Almohadis, and Beni Marin, on the soil of Portugal itself, or in Africa. In the closing years of the fifteenth century the power of the Ottoman Sultans was rising in the Levant. They had not yet conquered the Mameluke Sultans of Egypt and Syria, with whom the Christians had arrived at a *modus vivendi*—not good but tolerable. Selim I., surnamed the Bloody, swept them away after 1510. But already the Ottoman Sultans were a towering and a dreadful menace. When the Portuguese smote the "Moors" on the East Coast of Africa and in Malabar, or as far away as Malacca, they were not only in their own opinion, but in reality, fighting for Christian Europe. Nor is it just to ignore the fact that when the caravels and carracks of Gama, Cabral, Almeida, and Albuquerque first came on to the great trade route, they met a Moslem competitor not altogether unlike themselves. During the centuries immediately preceding the fifteenth, Arab seamen and traders —it would be more accurate to say trading seamen — had planted themselves all along the great trade route, being materially helped by those re-

ligious scruples and caste rules which bar the sea to the Hindu. Not so much by force, though they could take to blows on occasion, as by missionary work among Hindus and Malays, and, most of all, by keen competition, the Arabs had mastered the trade route. They had driven away, by outsailing and underselling them, the Chinese junks, which had once come to Ceylon and Malabar, even to Ormuz and Aden. Long before Vasco da Gama anchored near, not at, Calicut, the Chinese had been confined to the seas east of Malacca. The Arab had one great advantage over the European in the East, Middle or Far. He would take to himself a wife of the daughters of the people, and did not raise a debased progeny. The Moplahs, whom, and whose turbulence, we know, are the descendants of Arab fathers and Malabarese mothers—dangerous fanatics and chronic rebels, but good boatmen and farmers. Now these strenuous "Moor" traders and their Moplahs were not the men to be evicted from their profitable monopoly of sea-borne commerce without a fight. They opposed the newcomers forcibly. Until the Portuguese had proved that they too were strong men armed, there was no possibility of trade for them.

It was then, we must allow, not out of mere brutality that the Portuguese set about clearing a space for themselves with the high hand. But *est modus in rebus.* They had no idea of working with aught but the high hand. When a Spaniard or Portuguese, or man of the South of Europe in general, is expostulated with for barbarity to an animal, he as often as not replies that the beast is not "a Christian." It was in this spirit that the Portuguese bore himself to "the heathen." We may allow that with his training he could not think otherwise. But the spectacle he gave to the world was horrible. The Moors were for him vermin to be exterminated; the Hindus were at the best degraded, and now utterly heretical, offspring of ancestors once converted by St Thomas. They had fallen away from grace, and must be reclaimed by rigour.

Portuguese writers have spared posterity all trouble in looking for proof of the charges of cruelty brought against the Fidalgos. Nothing shocks their modern reader more than the complacency with which they record examples of barbarity in the generally flowing and watery vein of their prose. They do not apologise; they simply record with approval. It is quite unnecessary to go to English, Dutch, or French authorities. Even if we look into the Tohfut-ul-Mujahideen as translated by Lieutenant Rowlandson, we find nothing so damning as the Portuguese records. Without dwelling on stories of mutilations and filth, here is a case in point which is quite equal to all we need in order to realise the character of their actions, and of their records of those deeds. It is

quotable, and comparatively clean. The author of the 'Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalboquerque,' who was his son, is telling of his operations on the coast of Arabia about the Ras-al-Had. Among other places which he attacked and destroyed was Muscat. Our author tells how, while the inhabitants were fleeing to the hills, Antonio do Campo, who was standing close to Dalboquerque, saw a number of women and children running away. At once, and to all appearance with the entire approval of "the Great Afonso," he started in pursuit, overtook and butchered them. This vile inhumanity is recorded without blame—nay, even as an example of zeal and efficiency. The "Great Afonso" did the same thing, and on a larger scale, over and over again, as part of a deliberate policy of Schecklichkeit.

A Portuguese apologist might be tempted to reply by quoting instances of English, Dutch, or French cruelty. He might open his 'Purchas' at the place where you find "Scot's Account of Java." There he and we can read, on the authority of the man himself, how he, a factor of the Honourable Company, and others its servants, tortured a native whom they accused of theft from their "godown," at length, persistently, and with refinements of ferocity. But what was the sin of a few among the servants of the Company was the habitual practice of the Portuguese. It would be open to our supposed apologist to plead the well-known barbarity of the fifteenth century. But that age was notoriously wicked, and had fallen far below the standard of times when chivalry meant something better than claptrap, and private theatricals in the tournament way. James, the conqueror of Aragon, was not squeamish. He once tore out the tongue of one of his clergy who had blabbed a royal sin confided to him in confession. Yet when some of his soldiers began to slaughter the Moorish women and children of a town he had captured, the great king, who was also a very big muscular man, rode fiercely into the middle of them, laying about him with a mace, or long sword. He was a hard hitter in open war, but a true knight and a gentleman. The Portuguese could hit hard in battle too, but they rejoiced in smiting and torturing a subdued enemy, the women and the children included.

Their religious fanaticism has been pleaded on their behalf. They certainly, as has been said already, did not look upon the pagan as quite a fellow human being. Nevertheless, we have to make a distinction on that point. There is a marked difference between the years before 1560, when the Inquisition was fully established in Goa, and those which came later. In earlier times the Fidalgos could live in harmony with Hindus, and when once their superiority was firmly planted, even with Mahometans.

A great change for the worse came when the leadership passed to the dull clerical bigotry of the Holy Office. Afonso Dalboquerque could dominate his priests. Later governors and viceroys trembled before them.

It is, however, easy to exaggerate the share which doctrines touching the question, What gives legitimacy to "Dominion"? or religious fanaticism had in controlling the conduct of the Fidalgos. We must look closer. They started, as we have seen, from Burgundian and other French "gentry" or *noblesse*. Now what more than aught else marked that type of man all through the Middle Ages was an incurable incapacity for discipline, the fruit of a touchy vanity which implied a reckless self-assertion, and that again was incompatible with true military obedience or true loyalty. It could exist alongside of much personal gallantry and generosity. But it was an invincible obstacle to real order. Romance, when written by one who knows, is a trustworthy witness. Take Merimée's 'Jacquerie,' and you have in the persons of his nobles and knights a thoroughly sound picture of the French chevalier and his ways. A collection of such champions was an armed mob. They would be all equal, for you cannot be more than *gentilhomme:* no one of them could without dishonour allow another to go in front; praise of one was implied blame of all the rest. Therefore they would all tumble in together, every man with his banner displayed, reckless, unthinking, disobedient, self-assertive. At Courtrai, at Crecy, at Poitiers, Thebes, Nicopolis, or Aljubarrota, it was always the same story. Prudence and foresight were cowardice; obedience was a humiliation. So with banners displayed, and shouting Monjoie St Denis, possessed by the devils of vanity, they plunged headlong into any trap laid for them. From that the Fidalgos started. In the Eastern Seas, far away from the only authority they recognised as entitled to rule them—namely, the king—and even in those waters a long way off, the *alter ego* of the king, the Governor-General, or Viceroy, at Goa, their total unfitness to form a service acting by rule grew ever more rank. Insubordination was constant, and all this self-assertion rapidly interpreted itself into mere grasping at plunder by force from the pagans, or by mere fraud and corruption in rivalry among their own people. As for their morality—of which the witnesses, of whom it is enough to name the Jesuit Saint Francis Xavier, have much to say—why, their Church had taught them that orthodoxy of creed, not knowledge of the faith, but explicit belief in the Church and implicit belief in what she taught, was the one thing necessary. The sins of the flesh were a small matter in comparison. So the Fidalgos could give way to their lusts, and the non-Fidalgos followed

the example set them. Saint Francis Xavier shuddered as he looked on what it had all come to by the middle of the sixteenth century, when the precious empire of Portugal in the East was at its height. What requires explaining is not why that same empire so called came to a base end, but how it could ever come into existence.

The explanation is easily given. When Vasco da Gama sailed from Malinde across the Arabian Sea, which we now call the Indian Ocean, the trade route was busily worked by an undefended seaborne commerce. Trade winds blow along it in regular alternation, or by seasons or monsoons, from south towards north-east when the sun is over the northern hemisphere, from north towards south-west when he is over the southern. Where masses of high land break up and deflect the lower currents of the air, there are local variations with land breezes which blow out to sea, alternating with sea breezes which blow in on the land. A swing as of a pendulum goes on all through the years from season to season. The wind follows the sun—that is the dominating rule. So the seamen could always rely on a trusty wind to take him out, and in due time another would blow in the opposite direction to bring him home. Between the seasons there is unsettled weather, but then he lay in port, was busy unloading and loading again. No great knowledge of navigation was called for to work this trade route, only the seamanship of the coaster who could safely strike across the open sea because he could rely on a following wind. Ships of poor quality and primitive rigging would serve the turn when all they were asked to do was to run before the wind. Asiatic vessels were not fitted to turn to windward, and this stream of inferior craft went on a beaten path through narrow gates of the sea to fixed destinations by the Straits of Malacca and Sunda, round Ceylon, along the coast of Malabar, to Ormuz and Aden. It was undefended by its own strength or by the State. The great monarchies of India were on the tableland of the Deccan or in Hindustan. The coast was split up into realms of the "little coast Rajahs" in India. The archipelago was divided among numerous kings of islands, or of parts of islands. They were generally in a chronic state of feud. Nothing was easier than to play off one against the other—the Rajah of Cochin against the Zamorin of Calicut, the King of Tidore against the King of Ternate. Any small force of Europeans could have dominated the great trade route.

Now the Portuguese ships and their guns were but poor if judged by standard of the eighteenth century. But they were overwhelmingly superior to the Asiatic seafarers they had to conquer. The Mameluke Sultan of Egypt and Syria, the only competitor they had

to fear, was weak, and, moreover, the last of that strange dynasty was fighting in vain for his life against the Ottoman Sultans, just as the Portuguese were planting themselves in India. How easy the task was is obvious by one fact which cannot be disputed. The whole essentials of the work was done between 1508, when Dalboquerque paid his first visit to Ormuz, and December 1515, when he died at Goa—in seven years, and with a loss in battle which was trifling even in proportion to the small numbers engaged. The "great Afonso" had seized a central headquarters at Goa, had rendered the little coast Rajahs of Malabar tributary, had subdued Ormuz and taken Malacca. He had indeed failed to occupy Aden, but he had invaded the Red Sea, and had cruised there, no enemy daring to say him nay on the water. In short, he had fixed a strangle-hold on the great trade route of the East.

It was no superhuman feat. A brutal man can cow a school of little boys by mere *Schrecklichkeit*. The greatness of the man, for some greatness there was, appears not in his strife with the Asiatics, but in the firmness of will wherewith he dragged his crowd of wrangling, vain, disobedient Fidalgos along with him. The spirit and the guiding rule of the man were of the simplest. The King of Portugal was "Lord of the Navigation, Conquest, and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, and India." The Pope said he was, and therefore his dominion was founded in grace. So Dalboquerque, sure of his right, for he represented the king, could approach Ormuz, burning towns in Arabia which did not submit at once, and sending captives whose noses and ears he had caused to be cut off *in terrorem* before him to be a warning. When off the island he demanded submission and tribute from the rulers of Ormuz because the King of Portugal was their lawful lord. Resistance was rebellion or treachery, to be punished by slaughter, fire-raising, and mutilation of prisoners; and so it was always and everywhere.

As the Portuguese were few, though far better armed than their unhappy victims, the work was not done without effort and displays of valour. Many Fidalgos fought fiercely against long odds. Some could show a fine spirit. There was Ruy d'Araujo, who is to be named for honour. He and some other Portuguese had been left behind at Malacca by Siqueira. When Dalboquerque appeared off the port with his fleet, they were held as prisoners and hostages by the Malay rajah. Dalboquerque began by negotiating for the rajah's surrender. He found means to send a letter to Araujo, and to receive an answer from him. It was his wish not to risk the lives of the captives as far as was possible. Araujo told him to leave them to their fate, and to come on. So might some British officer have answered in a similar case during the mutiny. Yet Araujo

is a shining exception. There was little of him and much of his contemporary, Vincent de Sodre. That man having been stationed to aid the Rajah of Cochin against the Zamorin of Calicut, sailed away on a piratical cruise to the Red Sea, leaving his ally and the handful of his countrymen who were ashore in the utmost peril. He perished through mere self-willed arrogance and bad seamanship.

In fact, all the vices which finally rotted the Portuguese settlements in the East were rampant even in their heroic age. The root of them, or perhaps one ought rather to say the fruit, was that they were trying for the wrong thing, and therefore would not do right. Not the least deadly of their errors was that they endeavoured to form a mixed race, not only by encouraging, but by enforcing marriage with native women. They tolerated unions which were no marriage. They forbade the immigration of Portuguese women. An incident of their early days reveals the whole scope of the essential baseness of their policy and its folly. When Vasco da Gama came to India as Viceroy on his third voyage, three Portuguese women hid themselves in his ships. He had them whipped in the streets in Goa, and then married them to soldiers. It was done as an example. To whom and for what? To the natives presumably, to show them how low was the level of the respect the Portuguese had of themselves. The Fidalgos, who were ready enough to ruffle on the point of honour, made no protest against this defilement of the white race. Of course, the result of this insane policy was the formation of the Goanese and similar mixed breeds.

Where the aim was mistaken and the spirit was vile, what could follow? Only corruption and disorder. The whole Portuguese venture in the East was one unpardonable error. It began when the carracks sailed from Lisbon. They came overcrowded with passengers, a thousand or two thousand in a single ship, packed so tight that numbers had to sleep on the upper decks. No attempt was made to secure cleanliness. All the filth was drained into the ballast and the bilge. The carracks became floating pest-houses. It was calculated by the Portuguese that a third of those who sailed to the East died on the way. Few ever came back. Their places at home were taken by imported negroes, who were married to the white women. Portugal is full of negro blood, a fact which accounts for a good deal we have seen and see. The Fidalgos sank out there into a horrible mish-mash of mixed breeds, in which the worst brutality of Europe was mingled with the worst corruption of Asia. For Portugal herself, the Eastern Empire was an unrelieved disaster. Her trade was conducted with Italian,

German, Netherland, and English capital and goods. Her merchants were only the commission agents of Welzers or Fuggers and other bankers of Italy and the north. What came to her was booty gained by a few adventurers, and the hire of the ships. The proportion of them lost on the way out and home was enormous, and grew larger as time went on. On the day after the English and Dutch traders had intruded on the Eastern Seas, the whole flimsy and pretentious card-castle of Portuguese Empire began to tumble down, because its foundations were torn from beneath it. The ruin was not wrought by mere force. The English and Dutch assailants came bringing their own goods for trade, and undersold them. The number of their ships taken by the English and Dutch companies' captains was not very great—far less than the Portuguese lost by their own bad seamanship. Their power was not based on good administration and genuine trade, but only on the bullying supremacy of the strongest-armed man for the time being. It could last only so long as the north of Europe did not insist on trading to the Eastern Seas itself and directly. Portugal was poor, thinly populated, had no manufactures, and little to export. It could rule over the trade route only so long as it held a monopoly of the right to carry.

One can imagine ways by which the Portuguese might have done better, and might have kept an honourable place when the inevitable end of their solitary rule came. By holding only a minimum of necessary posts, by giving the best of their thoughts and their attention to their ships and their seamanship, by working the port-to-port trade of the East fairly, and by abstaining from religious persecution, they might have gained honest profit for themselves while rendering a real service to Asia. When they lost, as they were bound to lose, the exclusive right to carry between the East and Europe, they could still have been honourably active in the "Indies." But such a modest policy as this called for the direction of sober men of business, like the "Governor and Company of the merchants of London trading to the East," or the Dutch merchants who combined to form the "United Netherlands East India Chartered Company." It was clean, and clear impossible for the Portuguese Fidalgos. At their best they were even as those knights of the Middle Ages who went to the wars in hope of growing rich by the ransom of prisoners. At their worst they sank to the level of the disbanded mercenaries of the fifteenth century who were branded for infamy with the name of "Ecorcheurs." It was a misfortune that Europe was first shown to Asia under so hideous a shape.

MURDER DISQUALIFIES.

BY ALAN GRAHAM.

CHAPTER IX.

"Good evening, landlord," he said, leaning his tall frame on the polished counter. "You'll remember me?"

"Ay, fine I ken ye, Mr Rintoul," replied Mr Morrison. "Wud ye be wanting anything?"

"A room for the night and a meal. But meantime a glass of your famous whisky would be acceptable—for the stomach's sake."

Rab Wilson was alert to notice the bearing of the visitors one to another, while retaining his air of indifference. At the entrance of Rintoul, McNeil had by a hurried movement turned his back upon the bar. It was not to be, however. Rufus emptied his glass quickly, and moved confidently towards the bar parlour.

"And whom have we here? There will be some one that remembers me, I'll wager," he said, pausing and looking down upon the three.

His green eyes sharpened, his bold face took on a sterner look, as his gaze lit upon McNeil. Then he smiled easily and stepped into the circle of the fire.

"Major McNeil, no less!" he exclaimed, his smile and his tone tinged with mockery. "This is a far cry from our last meeting-place. I would hardly have thought that you took enough interest in my humble affairs to bring you all this way just to see me take possession of my estates. Still, it's a compliment, and I'm grateful for it."

Rab Wilson was at a loss. He could not be certain if the surprise was genuine or assumed. It was quite likely, he felt, that it was a piece of play-acting, and that McNeil and his friend were in reality in the service of Rufus Rintoul. He inclined to that belief, indeed, in his total ignorance of Francesca Marinetti.

The Honourable Thomas Owen, also, was intensely interested. It was his first meeting with Rufus, and he was delighted to find him such a formidable-looking opponent. It promised well for the excitement of the contest.

McNeil was thinking rapidly. His parting from Rintoul had been far from cordial, but nothing was to be gained by an open antagonism. He had, indeed, a half-formed desire to try his wits once more against the man who had so thoroughly beaten him once. He rose

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with a smile, therefore, and offered his hand to the newcomer.

"This is a pleasant surprise, Mr Rintoul," he said cordially. "I think I heard you order a bed for the night, so I hope my friend and I will have the pleasure of your company to supper. Bubbly, this is Mr Rintoul — the Honourable Thomas Owen."

With a sardonic smile Rufus Rintoul acknowledged the introduction. Rab Wilson he ignored as a mere country lout, and Rab gazed into the fire stolidly, with the air of a man unexpectedly thrown into the company of his betters. His mind, however, was far from being as blank as his face.

"So, Mr Owen, your friend has brought you north to sample our fine Scots air?" said Rintoul, seating himself on the edge of the table and swinging a handsome leg. "You couldn't have chosen a better spot than Dorning. If you think of stopping long I hope you'll do me the honour of calling at Dorning House. I shan't be in residence for a day or two yet, but as soon as I take possession I shall be delighted to see you both."

"That's very good of you, sir," said Bubbly cautiously. "I should be very pleased to see Dorning House. So would McNeil, I'm sure. If you happen to be in residence while we are here, we shall certainly call."

McNeil remained silent and let Bubbly talk. He felt sure that by his boasting Rintoul hoped to betray him into some admission, and he had already had sufficient experience of the would-be laird's methods.

Bubbly led the conversation to the safe topic of the history of the ruined Dorning Castle, upon which Rufus discoursed learnedly and at length. Rab Wilson sat long enough to convince himself that he would learn nothing further to his interest from the conversation; then finished his beer, and, with a parting nod to McNeil, strode heavily out.

No sooner had he gone than Rufus Rintoul turned an ironical smile upon McNeil.

"So, notwithstanding my avuncular warning and advice, the lady is squandering her siller on a wild-goose chase," he said. "I daresay it brings grist to somebody's mill, though —if ye'll excuse the mixing of the metaphor."

McNeil flushed at the imputation, which he was not in a position to refute. As before, he was at a disadvantage with Rufus Rintoul, for he must maintain silence regarding the affairs of his mistress, whereas Rufus, being his own master, could shape his own policy.

Bubbly, aware of his friend's difficulty, hastened to change the subject.

"You talk in riddles, so far as I am concerned, Mr Rintoul," he said. "Now there's one subject on which I'm something of an authority, as McNeil will admit, yet I'd like to have your unbiassed opinion on a technical point. Is the beer of Scotland really so vastly

superior to our English brew, or is it merely something in the atmosphere here that inclines one's palate more strongly in the direction of beer in general? Join me in a tankard, sir, and help me to settle the point."

Rufus Rintoul grinned appreciatively, and accepted the invitation.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, as he bowed his acknowledgment over the froth of the tankard, "I see that you are determined to keep your own council. God knows I've no wish to force your confidence, so we'll let the subject of the Rintoul inheritance drop. I see no sense in your attitude myself. I'm perfectly aware that you're here on behalf of my niece Francesca, and that she's waiting in Edinburgh with the rest of her gang of heroes while you spy out the land, so there's no cause to make a mystery of it. It'll maybe interest you to know that her cousin, Jean Rintoul, is stopping at the manse here, and means to make a bid for fortune with the assistance of a clerical desperado of the name of Murdoch."

Rufus made this statement with an ironical smile, as though he were relating the foolish intrigues of children.

"As for me," he went on, with a shrug of his fine shoulders, "I'm content to hoe my own row, as we say hereabouts. But there — that's enough of the forbidden subject. I think, Mr Owen, that your judgment on the beer is sound. It *is* better than English beer, and with your permission I'll have the landlord replenish the tankards."

For the remainder of the evening Rufus Rintoul laid himself out to entertain, and succeeded in proving that he could be a charming companion. The conversation lay mostly between him and the Honourable Thomas Owen, for McNeil felt uncomfortable and was inclined to be morose. The presence of Rintoul threatened to interfere with his plans, which included the reconnoitring of the surroundings of Dorning House. He decided that nothing could be done until next day, but that he would have Bubbly out of his bed by daybreak, make the necessary investigations, and return to Edinburgh by the earliest train possible.

At nine o'clock precisely Rab Wilson knocked at the back door of the manse. He felt that it might have been more judicious to go to the front, but he did not wish it to be thought that he was presuming. As it happened it did not matter, for it was Annie's "night out," and the door was opened by the minister himself.

"It's you, Rab?" he asked, peering past the oil lamp that he carried. "Come awa' ben."

Murdoch dropped into the broad accent of the villagers, trying to put Rab at his ease. He led his visitor through the unlit kitchen, the rays of his lamp causing a stampede amongst the cockroaches

("clocks" they call them in Dorning), through a flagged passage to the front of the house, and ushered him into the comfortable lamp-lit parlour, into the presence of his wife and Jean Rintoul.

Before the war Rab Wilson would have been confused beyond utterance by his surroundings, but campaigning broadens the outlook, and several periods of convalescence had thrown him amongst people of many classes, and made him a guest in the palaces of the great.

"My wife, Rab. Miss Rintoul you know very well."

"Good evening, Mrs Murdoch. Good evening, Miss Rintoul. The meenister tells me that you can dae wi' a helpin' hand, sae I've come tae offer mine."

He held out, as he spoke, the hand in question, and Jean, who had risen at his entry, placed her own shyly within it.

"I knew you would be willing to help me, Rab," she said, looking up at him with a grateful smile. "You were my stand-by when I was a tiny girl. Sit down, and let's hold a council of war."

Mrs Murdoch was almost unrecognisable as the cheerful slangy lady of the locked room. In the presence of her husband's parishioners she hardly dared to speak lest she should disgrace him by some harmless phrase hideously inappropriate to a minister's wife. As she lived in daily fear of this catastrophe, she did not appear at her best in the eyes of Dorning. A pained smile and a selection of monosyllables were all that she dared venture. Elders were her particular bugbear, and in their presence even the smile was more than she could muster.

With Rab, of whom she had heard as something of a doubtful character, she felt more at her ease. She was drawn to him as to a fellow-outcast amidst a population stiff with propriety, and she greeted him as an oasis in the desert.

"Good evening, Mr Wilson," she said pleasantly. "I hear you are conspiring with these good people against the peace of the realm."

"I'm in guid company," replied Rab with a grin. "If the meenister can reconcile it wi' his conscience, it's no' for me tae object."

"I hope we shan't have to do anything illegal," said Jean. "Don't look so disappointed, Rab."

"Weel, it would be a peety no' tae ha'e a dust-up wi' some o' the ither pairties, seein' everything's in train for it," replied Rab.

"How do you mean 'in train for it'?" asked Murdoch, sitting up alertly.

"There's some gye suspeecious chairacters doon at the Rintoul Arms," replied Rab, and went on to explain what he had seen and heard earlier in the evening, giving his own idea as to the relation of Rufus Rintoul to the others.

"And do you think you and me together can give a good account of the three of them?"

asked the minister at the end of the narrative.

"There's a doot," admitted Rab reluctantly. "Mr Rintoul and Neil McNeil are juist aboot oor wecht, without countin' the wee body they ca' Owen. But Mr Rintoul is the only yin we're concerned wi'. If we can haud on tae him an' keep him oot o' the Big Hoose the ithers 'll be helpless."

"Provided that, as you think, they are acting with Rufus Rintoul," said Murdoch. "You may be wrong in that, however. They may represent the other claimant, Miss Rintoul's cousin."

"They're ower thick wi' Mr Rintoul for that, I'm thinkin'," Rab objected.

"Mr Murdoch, don't you think we ought to give it up?" asked Jean, who had been listening silently with wide-open grey eyes while Rab told of the new arrivals. "It isn't right that you should be mixed up in anything that may cause a scandal in the village. You have seen what my uncle is like, and from Rab's description his companions are probably desperate characters. I would rather retire from the contest than get you into any trouble."

"Rats!" exclaimed Mrs Murdoch, forgetting in her excitement the presence of a villager. "Old Bill isn't the sort of man to eat the leek simply because people may talk. Thank the Lord he—I mean, I'm very glad indeed to think," she corrected herself as she realised her indiscretion, "that he's a bit of a bruiser even if he is a minister."

Conscious that her conclusion was lacking in the refinement expected of the minister's wife, she glanced doubtfully at Rab. His face was unchanged and stolid, but she fancied a gleam of new interest in his eye as it met hers.

"Still, a minister can't afford to be a . . . a bruiser, in a little village," objected Jean, her neat little chin showing signs of the Rintoul obstinacy. "I think we should call the whole thing off."

"Jean, you may save your breath to cool your parritch," said the minister emphatically. "The point will not bear argument. Rab and I are determined to see you mistress of Dorning. I must admit, besides, that I'm just itching to get my hands on that red-headed uncle of yours."

"Gee-whiz! That's the stuff to give them," exclaimed his wife, whose impulsiveness had not been quelled by her migration from stage to manse.

She seized her husband's arms and dragged him to his feet, and before he could protest, danced him round the central table, to the tune of "Waltz me round once again, Willie." Suddenly conscious of her depravity, she released her hold, and flopped back into her chair.

"Good Lord, that's torn it," she panted. "I am ruined for ever. Nothing I can do can blacken my reputation

further, so I may as well deaden my sorrow with smoke."

From some secret hiding-place about her person she produced a crumpled yellow packet that held two or three cheap cigarettes. Rab Wilson was on his feet in a moment, a lighted match between his fingers.

"Thank you—so much," said Mrs Murdoch between puffs, glancing up half-mischievously, half-shamefacedly, at Rab. "I'm a martyr to asthma. I just *have* to inhale smoke, much as I loathe it."

Then, seeing the comical look on Rab's face—really a gallant attempt to express faith in this astounding statement—she broke into a merry laugh.

"It's not a bit of use. Don't try to believe me, Mr Wilson; it's hopeless," she said, with a gesture of despair. "Bill, I'm sorry I've given away the skeleton in the clerical cupboard. I told you before I married you that I wasn't cut out for the job, but you were *so* pig-headed—I mean dour."

"There's nobody complaining but yourself," said Murdoch with a smile and a look of mingled pride and affection at his wife. "I'm sure Rab feels a deal more at home than if you sat upright with your nose in the air and twiddled your thumbs in accordance with the tradition of the profession."

"Ye're richt there, Mr Murdoch," said Rab, with a grin of appreciation. "Ye'll no' believe it, but I'm e'en contemplatin' a jaunt tae the kirk next Sawbath masel'."

"To see if I have a cigarette in the minister's pew, I suppose?" suggested Mrs Murdoch.

"Na, na. There's nae fear o' that. It's juist that I've got a view o' the kirk frae a new airt, an' lost haud o' yin o' ma prejudices."

Murdoch laughed heartily.

"A nice picture you must have had of a minister's household, Rab," he said. "We're not such a gloomy lot as you might think."

"Deed an' ye're richt there. But maybe the mistake's no' sae yin-sided," replied Rab with a shrewd smile. "Ye micht ha'e raither a wrang notion o' a desperate chairacter like masel'."

"Splendid!" cried Jean Rintoul, clapping her little hands together. "Mr Murdoch—a hit, a hit, a palpable hit!"

"You're right, Jean, Rab had me there," admitted Murdoch. "We've each had our prejudices, and this little crack was all that was needed to remove them."

"And me," asserted Mrs Murdoch. "I restore myself to my pedestal herewith. I can see myself leading lady on the clerical stage in time. Why don't you have bishops in your silly old Church, Bill?"

"A nice wife you'd be for a bishop, Clarice," said Jean scornfully. "It's lucky for Mr Murdoch that he can never be one. Even as it is, you'll be a trial when he is Moderator of the General Assembly. But

you frivolous people have got miles away from the point. I was trying to get you to agree that I should give up all hope of the estate."

"An' Mr Murdoch telt ye very plainly that he wudna be a pairty tae sich havers, an' I'm wi' him, hairt an' hand. We'll pit ye in the Big Hoose, even if yer uncle's heid *is* red," declared Rab.

"That's the spirit," said the minister. "We'll get quietly up to the house a good hour before dawn and guard the two entrances. Exactly to the minute, Jean (I'll look up the exact time of sunrise to-morrow), you'll cycle up the drive to the front door and hammer on it until Ronald opens to you. If your uncle tries the same game, one of us will close with him, and whistle for the other. As soon as we know which door he has made for, you see, we can join forces to keep him out. However hot he and his two friends make it for us, we can surely hold him back long enough for you to take possession."

"Jean, pass me over my housekeeping book, please," said Mrs Murdoch.

"You callous creature," said Jean as she obeyed. "When these dear men are planning to risk their lives for me, you can think of nothing but your wretched house."

"I was thinking of raw steak," replied Mrs Murdoch calmly. "And I want to write it down in case I forget. Will a pound be enough, Old Bill? I don't know how much goes to an eye."

The minister smiled beneath his big moustache.

"She's not so callous, you see, Jean," he said.

"I apologise. But I do hope her gloomy outlook is not justified."

It was late before Rab left, a comforting glass of hot toddy in his wame, and a geniality towards the Kirk of Scotland in his heart for the first time in his life.

CHAPTER X.

Neil McNeil roused Bubbly soon after dawn next day, and, notwithstanding his protests, made him dress silently and slip downstairs and out of the inn, carrying his boots in his hand. The early morning air was biting, and the Honourable Thomas Owen's teeth rattled together as he sat on the edge of the horse-trough putting on his boots, and looking as miserable as an undertaker's mute. McNeil stood over him with a cheerful smile, which was in itself an injury.

"I object to nothing in reason — nothing," grumbled Bubbly, as he fumbled at a broken lace with chilled fingers. "But to get up when the best people are just going to bed is pure, crystal-clear, damned foolishness. This is

the hour at which the human intellect is at its lowest ebb, and even a silkworm or a common bug would know better than drag a man out of bed for the advancement of plots and conspiracies when his brain isn't even capable of answering to its own name. Besides, if you'd only told me last night I'd have taken a bottle of beer up to my room. It's death to see the sun rise on an empty stomach."

"Come on, you miserable devil," said McNeil, unperturbed. "You know we had to shake Rintoul off before I could show you the lie of the land. Let's run. It'll warm you up."

"Run? Angels and ministers of grace defend us! I won't run. It's undignified, and it makes me pant."

"All right. Let's walk. So long as we get clear away before the village wakes, you can do as you like."

"The only thing I want to do at present is to be thoroughly disagreeable," said Bubbly bitterly.

McNeil led him across the village green, where the short close grass shone silver-grey with dew, towards the side of the triangle formed by the high wall that surrounded the ruined castle.

"We can't get in at this time of day by the door in the wall, because the gardener won't be here yet," said Neil. "But when I was a boy we had a private entrance of our own. I daresay it is still climbable."

Bubbly groaned at the prospect, but followed obediently as McNeil led the way down the road to where the wall turned off at a right angle. Beyond lay a thick coppice bounded by the usual green paling. McNeil clambered over and forced a way through the thick dew-sodden undergrowth, following the line of the second side of the wall. For perhaps five minutes he struggled forward, and then paused to await his companion. Sounds of breaking twigs and blasphemy heralded Bubbly's approach.

"This is better than Fleet Street," chuckled McNeil at sight of the sodden and bedraggled figure. "This is real life, my boy."

"It's a damned nightmare," retorted Owen.

"You are a real Londoner, Bubbly. The joys of country life are lost on you. Why, the very smell of the morning makes my blood run more quickly. Come along. This is where we get over."

The wall on this hidden side of the castle grounds had been allowed to lapse into decay. Its battlemented top was broken and irregular, and at places several of the top courses had dropped out, leaving gaps only about twelve feet from the ground. McNeil scrambled up the trunk of a forked elm, one of whose branches stretched across a gap in the wall and overhung the grounds of the castle.

"Follow me, Bubbly," he called, as he clambered lightly along the branch and dropped

upon the wall. "It's easier than it looks."

The Honourable Thomas Owen accomplished the journey successfully, and the two men dropped upon the inner side of the wall.

The castle gardens were charming in the fresh morning silence. Their stiff spring bedding of hyacinths and tulips, scrupulously geometrical and aggressively accurate in colour arrangement, had an old-world air admirably maintained by the trim box edges, and the grotesque topiary work of the shrubs that dotted the level space. The paths between and around the flower-beds were dull orange with a fine sea-gravel which recalled to McNeil childish hours spent searching for the delightful minute shells —silver-willies, pearlies, and cat's-cradles — whose names rushed to his mind at the feel of his feet on the paths.

Crossing the main garden, he led his companion towards an opening in a thick yew hedge beyond which, on a grassy knoll, the ivy-clad ruins of Dorning Castle looked out over the surrounding levels.

"From the castle wall we shall get a splendid view of Dorning House and its surroundings," explained McNeil as they climbed the winding moss-grown steps that led up to the castle. "Feeling better?"

The exercise and the warmth of the mounting sun had combined to thaw Bubbly.

"Not so bad," he admitted. "Rum old place this. The garden's rather like Battersea Park—on a very small scale. If they'd clear away these ruins and level down the ground there would be just about room for a bandstand and a refreshment room."

"You little vandal," exclaimed McNeil. "Can't you work in a cocoanut shy or a steam roundabout? Now follow me, and look after your footing, for the going's none too good."

He led the way through a high arched doorway into the interior of the castle, where the air struck chill and damp, and gloomy halls opened on either hand. Passing these, he went on to where a narrow opening led to a spiral stone stair. The central support was gone and the steps protruded irregularly from the wall.

McNeil climbed upward, supporting himself with his hands on the higher steps that stood out at all angles from the circular wall. Owen gave him a start and followed cautiously. It was a precarious climb, for many of the steps were broken off within a few inches of the wall, but both men reached the top without accident. The stairway opened out upon a flagged path about a yard wide, which had at one time been continuous upon the top of the castle wall, but which was now a mere fragment, a few yards in length, and unprotected on the outer side by any parapet. Bubbly felt a peculiar sensation at the pit of his stomach as he looked sheer down upon the tumbled stone-work thirty feet beneath him.

"Now you can see the whole scene of operations," said McNeil, waving his arm in a wide curve outward.

The Firth of Forth spread out—a cold grey-blue in the early morning light—with the distant Fife coast just dimly visible. Anchored between, Fidra and the Bass Rock looked forbiddingly black and rugged, while close inland, where the Loun flowed into the Firth, the little island of Meath lay—a mere rock with a few patches of green on its more level surface.

Between the sea and the wall of the castle gardens lay Dorning House in pleasantly wooded grounds, the wide loop of the Loun shining clearly round three sides of it. The carriage drive could be traced at intervals where the trees grew thinly. It stretched in a wide curve from the West Lodge to the East Lodge, a distance of over a mile, with Dorning House approximately in the middle.

"We can see more from here than if we spent all day spying in the grounds," said Neil, when he had pointed out to his companion all the objects of interest. "There is only one side of the house that is approachable—the front. The Loun shuts off the other three. It is deep, and thirty or forty feet across."

"Somebody might have a boat — or swim," suggested Owen.

"True—but *we* don't want to. We can surround the house from inside the Loun, and if any one tries to cross—our friend Rintoul, for instance—we have him easily. I want you to take particular note of all the details of the place, as you will have to place the men, and you've got to bear in mind that it will be pitch dark. There's no moon."

"*Me* place the men! Where will you be?"

"With the Signorina, of course."

Already a certain jealousy had germinated in each man's heart. So far, it had only shown itself in an occasional word, a certain half-conscious bidding for Francesca's favour, or a barely perceptible coolness towards each other. Now, for the first time, it appeared boldly in the open light.

"Hang it, Neil, it's preposterous," exclaimed Owen, his tone betraying, more than his words, the real nature of his feelings.

"Why preposterous?" retorted McNeil, his good-humoured tolerance giving way to a sharpness unusual in him. "I am the leader of the party. Surely my place is at the Signorina's side. But there is no reason to explain. It is for me to make the dispositions, and for you to carry them out."

"Then the whole affair will come to a sticky end, because you'd rather dance attendance on Signorina Marinetti than carry out your job conscientiously."

"You'll leave me to be judge of my own affairs, Owen," said McNeil, with a biting

coldness that was more formidable than an angry outburst. "Remember that you are here on sufferance."

"Sufferance be damned," retorted Bubbly excitedly. "I joined up to give the Signorina the benefit of my brains, and, God knows, they are going to be wanted if this is a specimen of your tactics. You—the only man who has any knowledge of the country—propose to leave seven of us, complete strangers to the district, to blunder about in pitch darkness with no better knowledge than I can get from a cock-eyed squint across country from this moth-eaten old ruin. And why? Because you want to do the noble, and usher the lady into her inheritance. I tell you, McNeil, you're not playing the game. You're playing your own hand for all it is worth."

McNeil was a proud man and stubborn. He recognised enough truth in his friend's words to feel the sting of them, but not enough to overcome the mixture of jealousy and obstinacy that possessed him. The backbone of truth in Bubbly's charge only succeeded in rousing his temper.

"This thing will be carried out as I order," he said overbearingly. "I've taken more from you than I would from most men, because of the past. But I've taken all I can carry. Get the positions fixed in your mind, for you'll want them before daybreak to-morrow."

The Honourable Thomas Owen looked at his friend shrewdly. He was no fool, and his quick mind summed up the situation accurately. He shrugged his narrow shoulders.

"Righto," he said resignedly. "I've told you the truth, and you know it. It's up to you now."

He stood in silence looking out upon the prospect, while McNeil watched him gloomily—dissatisfied with himself. He knew that he was in the wrong, but his pride would not let him admit it. When at last they clambered down the imperfect stairway, it was in a strained silence that neither cared to break.

They breakfasted at the Rintoul Arms—Rufus did not put in an appearance—and the conversation was confined to the mere necessary conventions of the meal. It was the same on the return journey to Edinburgh, where they arrived about noon, still unreconciled, to find their mistress holding her court in the large circular lounge of the hotel.

Francesca Marinetti had already made something of a sensation in the hotel. Her unbounded generosity and her natural theatricality made her insist that all her staff should live in the extravagant fashion that she herself practised. She brought the whole party by first-class sleeper from London, and engaged accommodation for them in the most expensive hotel in Edinburgh, notwithstanding the protests of her chief of staff.

"Hoots!" she exclaimed,

when McNeil suggested that quieter and cheaper lodgment would serve them equally well. "Shall I grudge them their comfort when they would risk their brave lives to serve me? Mio Dio, no!"

McNeil could not move her, for she could be as obstinate as he upon occasion, and the expedition had developed into something very like a royal progress. The previous evening, when McNeil and Owen were in Dorning, Francesca, arrayed in one of her most gorgeous evening frocks, had taken the head of the table in the large dining-room, with three henchmen on either hand. Naturally all eyes were turned upon the table, and as Francesca was entirely and delightfully unself-conscious—or rather so used to notice that she had ceased to be conscious of it—and her companions were so wrapped up in their mistress that they had eyes for nobody and nothing else, the party gave the onlookers sufficient cause for curiosity.

Francesca was again giving audience to her servants and admirers when McNeil and Owen returned from their expedition. It was just after noon, and the hotel lounge was filling with customers intent upon the morning draught which a grandmotherly Government prevented them from having earlier. There were few women present, and Francesca with her six gentlemen-in-waiting, each, like herself, with a bottle of stout in front of him, was sufficiently prominent.

As the new-comers joined the party Signorina Marinetti greeted them with a smile and with a hand outstretched to each.

"Ah! You have returned, my advance-guard," she cried, careless of the interested onlookers. "And what have you discovered? Are our plans complete?"

"Quite, Signorina," said McNeil. "I'll go over everything with you when you can spare me half an hour in private."

"Yes, yes," agreed Francesca eagerly. "You and I and the Honourable Owen will hold a council of war in my sitting-room."

McNeil had not intended to include Bubbly in the consultation, but he could hardly protest, for it was on account of the value of his friend's brains that he had first introduced him.

The enthusiastic and love-smitten Beattie created a diversion—and, incidentally, a sensation in the lounge—by proposing a toast.

"Now we're all together, boys, let's drink success to Signorina Marinetti and confusion to her rivals," he said, rising to his feet, glass in hand, the fire of his affection blinding him to the presence of strangers.

"Success to Signorina Marinetti and confusion to her rivals," echoed Wilson, starting to his feet beside Beattie.

The others followed perforce, McNeil vexed at the unnecessary publicity of the incident, for all eyes were fixed upon

their table, and many amused glances were exchanged between the habitués.

The toast was drunk enthusiastically. As McNeil feared, his impulsive mistress rose at once to thank her supporters for the compliment. For all she thought of or cared for them, the spectators might not have existed.

"Friends," she said, her rich voice vibrating with ready emotion, "I canna tell you the pride that is in my heart. When I am mistress of Dorning—and how can I fail with courage like yours to support me—you will be my friends for ever. I can say no more, or I'll greet. I drink to you all, my friends."

She drained a full glass of stout to the toast, and sat down with tears shining in her beautiful eyes.

Later, in the private sitting-room which, with her customary lavishness, she had engaged, McNeil related his meeting with her uncle, and repeated his statement as to her cousin Jean's participation in the contest.

"What chance has she, with only a priest to help her," said Francesca, "against myself and my eight champions? There is only my uncle to fear. Now tell me what you have arranged. I trust myself in your hands."

Bubbly listened silently while McNeil described Dorning House and its surroundings, illustrating his words by a rough plan of the district.

"All this Mr Owen has seen," he went on. "I propose to arrange this afternoon for the hire of two cars. The men will go ahead in the first, and take up their stations in the night under Owen's directions. We shall follow just in time to arrive before dawn, and run the car right up to Dorning House, while they hold back your rivals. I don't see how we can fail."

Bubbly wriggled uncomfortably, but remained silent.

"Oh, but, Major McNeil, you must be there to command," exclaimed Francesca eagerly. "You must not sacrifice yourself for me; I will never permit it. The Honourable Owen will stop with me, and you will lead my men to victory."

"But——"

"I'll no' hear a word. Eccolo! I have said it. The Honourable Owen is little, but he is brave and clever. He will be my bodyguard, while you reap the reward that you deserve after the hard work you have done for me."

McNeil — ashamed before — was too much disconcerted to argue the point further. He did not look at Bubbly, dreading to see in his eyes a look of triumph which, to do him justice, the little journalist hid admirably.

"It shall be as you wish then, Signorina," said Neil, as graciously as he felt capable of at the moment.

"And as for me," added Bubbly, "whatever part you wish me to play, Signorina, is the one that I long to have."

CHAPTER XI.

On that same night—the night preceding the fateful dawn that was to usher in this strange contest for a fortune—Ronald Aitken sat alone in what had been the housekeeper's room at the Big Hoose. The evening was chilly, and a cosy fire glowed in the grate, throwing strange lights and shadows on the little man's face. He was what the Dorning folk would call a "shilpit wee body," who had dried up rather than ripened with age. His skin had shrunk upon his facial bones; the loss of his teeth had driven his shaven jaws together, leaving a hard lipless line for the mouth; his spectacled eyes had sunk back into his skull; and his hair was thin, and clung in dull grey wisps to the nape of his skinny neck.

The line that represented his mouth, which the closing in of the jaws had widened until it seemed to cut the dry old face in two, gave an impression of hard determination that was more an indication of age than of character, for it is common enough to the old and toothless.

Though he had lived alone in Dorning House for the past three months with only a lassie from the home farm for a few hours daily to "do" for him, he still wore his butler's official black garb, and his stiff shirt-front and cuffs were as spotless as though he expected a call from his old master at any moment.

He sat by the fire studying, by the light of an oil lamp on the table behind him, a type-written wad of foolscap sheets—a copy of Robert Rintoul's will—though three months' constant study had rendered him familiar with every phrase of it. From time to time, from a capacious mull that lay within reach upon the table, he ladled into his nose sufficient snuff to have doped an ordinary man, and wiped the surplus from the thin curved chin that reached up to meet the droop of his nose.

From time to time he shook his head disapprovingly at something in the type-script in his shaky hands. Attached as he had been—and still was—to his old master, the will was not to his liking. He had said so many a time in his master's lifetime, only to be told that he was a damned old fool and had best mind his own business. For Robert Rintoul was an arbitrary master who, while giving his butler his full confidence and inviting comment, did not hesitate to turn and rend his retainer, when the latter's opinion or advice did not fit in with his whim.

Nevertheless, old Ronald had not hesitated to push the claim of his favourite—Jean Rintoul. During the years in which she had lived with her uncle he had become closely attached

to the orphaned girl, and his master's mad decision had come as a great shock to him.

With a sigh Ronald reached the end of his reading, folded the sheets carefully, removed his spectacles, and put them away in an old green leather case which he took from his tail pocket, and, after stoking his nose with a charge that all but emptied the mull, resigned himself to a spell of the speculation that had grown to be his principal occupation since the death of his master.

Would Miss Jean have a chance against that reckless ne'er-do-well, her Uncle Rufus? If only he, Ronald Aitken, had not a Calvinistic conscience in his daft old head, she would.

He shook the head in question sadly. It could not be. Seventy years of hard uprightness could not be gone back upon even for her. The dead Laird had his promise, and there was an end of it. "Let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay," said the Scripture, and Ronald was an elder in the kirk.

His mind wandered back to the circumstances that had led up to the making of the will. But for the greed and impudence of Rufus it would never have crossed the Laird's mind. The two brothers—the eldest and the youngest of the Rintoul family—had been at enmity from boyhood, though there was nearly twenty years difference in their years. Rufus had a small private income from his mother, just enough to prevent him from taking to a serious means of livelihood, yet not sufficient to gratify the expensive tastes he cultivated—with the result that he was habitually hard up.

Notwithstanding the bad terms on which he was with the Laird, he had the assurance to write on several occasions asking for loans, and on being told each time to go to the devil, he finally visited Dorning to make, as he said, a personal effort. If he got no money, at least he would have the satisfaction of having a good old Rintoul row with his brother.

The row lasted three days, by which time even Rufus had had enough, while the Laird was still at the height of his form. Fortunately for her, Jean was on a visit to a school friend at the time. To have sat at meals with these two could not have been any pleasure to her.

It would seem natural, after such an experience, that the Laird would have cut his youngest brother off without even the traditional shilling, but Rufus had succeeded, unknown to himself, in one thing. He had aroused in his brother's mind a suspicion and distrust of his niece.

The Laird had taken to the girl, notwithstanding his cynical outlook on humanity and his violent temper. She had such winning ways, such a ready acquiescence in his wishes, and took such care for his comfort, that he could

hardly have failed to be drawn to her.

The suspicion, sown in his mind by Rufus, that her affection was not disinterested, fell on fertile soil, germinated, and rapidly filled his whole mind.

Ronald remembered how he first spoke about his suspicions, and how he — Ronald — attempted to drive them from his master's mind — without success.

"It occurs to me, Ronald, that ye may be something of a time-server yourself," was the Laird's retort, when the butler pressed the cause of his young mistress. "It would be a nice canny job for a dour old man, with Jean for mistress, eh?"

"Fine you ken, Laird, that I had nae thocht o' that," said Ronald hotly. "But I canna haud my tongue when ye belittle yer ain flesh an' blood."

As the Laird grew older his wish to settle the succession of the estate grew stronger, but so, also, did his suspicion of his niece. He was for ever discussing the subject when he was alone with Ronald, but always without being able to bring himself to a decision. It was during one of these discussions that a casual phrase of his own suggested to his mind the idea of the will.

"I'm tired of the whole damned Rintoul family," he exclaimed bitterly. "There never were two of them that could be together for ten minutes without tearing the hearts out o' each other. Ronald, I've a good mind to let them fight it out among themselves."

The phrase recurred to him, and the idea appealed to his bitter humour. For some time after both Jean and Ronald would often surprise a hard smile upon his face when they came upon him suddenly.

Then one night, after Jean had gone to her room, he called Ronald in, and told him how he meant to leave the estate.

"Let me read it to you, Ronald," he said with a grin in which malice predominated. "This'll set them all by the ears."

Ronald listened with growing alarm as the harsh voice of his master read over the terms of the will gloatingly. By the end he had begun to wonder if the Laird's mind had gone.

"Ay, Ronald, I know what you're thinking. You have a face like a page of big type," said Robert Rintoul, looking up suddenly as he reached the end. "You think your auld master's gaun gyte, as you would put it, but you're wrong, you old fool, you're wrong. And I'll take care that none o' them 'll have the chance to say it after I'm gone either. To-morrow I'm for Edinburgh to get this signed and sealed; and what d'ye think, Ronald —I'm going to have myself examined by two of the best-known mad doctors in Scotland, and have them certify to my sanity at the time I

sign the will. Can you better that?"

"No, Laird; but I can better that sinfu' will by pittin' it i' the fire," retorted Ronald. "It's juist fair devilment, Laird, an' fine ye ken it yersel'."

"Maybe it is, Ronald; but bear this in mind: If it's a devil-made will, it's a will for devils worse than himself."

"Dinna say that, Laird—dinna! Think o' puir Miss Jean. There's little o' the de'il in her, Guid kens."

"So that's the way the wind blows still, is it? You don't mind comparin' your master to the de'il, but you must be practising nicer ways for your would-be future mistress, eh?"

"Ye may say that, Laird Rintoul, gin it pleases ye, but ye ken better. There's ae thing, tho', I'm tellin' ye. Ye can scart the name o' Ronald Aitken oot o' yer will, for he'll no' ha'e pairt or paircel in't."

Deeply did Ronald regret, as he sat by the fire shaking his grey old head, that he had not held to that resolution. His master had been too much for him, however. Robert Rintoul could be plausible and insinuating when he wanted anything, and knew that he could not attain his end by browbeating—the method he preferred. He pointed out to Ronald that his refusal to act as umpire would not prevent the will from being made, but would only bring in some outsider to judge the contest—an outsider who might be susceptible to bribery,—a fact which would give Rufus an unfair advantage. For Jean Rintoul's sake, explained the Laird cunningly, it was Ronald's duty to accept the position. He must see that the lassie had fair play.

At this time Francesca Marinetti had not yet come to England. Her uncle was aware of her existence, but he never apparently considered her a serious competitor, though he inserted the clause making a three months' interval between his death and the date of taking possession, in order to give all his possible heirs an equal chance.

To him and to Ronald the contest was a duel between Rufus and Jean, and the old butler finally succumbed to temptation, in order that his young mistress might be certain of fair play. He felt sure that his master's youngest brother would resort to any means, however criminal, to gain the estate, and at least he would be there to see that the weaker party had a fair chance. Jean he idolised—Rufus he loathed; but whatever the result, he would be there to see that the game was played according to the rules. He would trust no one but himself. Therein the Calvinistic conscience made itself manifest.

When the time of the Laird's fatal illness arrived these consultations became closer and more confidential. The Laird's obsession grew as he drew nearer to his end. Weak as

he was, he would chuckle feebly as he imagined the various phases of the struggle for his estate. He would relate these possibilities to Ronald almost as if they were facts, and gloat over the trouble he was laying up for his unfortunate heirs.

"Man, Ronald, but I wish I could be here to see it all," he said on one occasion. "It'll be a rare ploy. But maybe I'll see it from where I go. D'you think there's any chance o' that, Ronald?"

The old butler shook his head disapprovingly.

"Ye'll be ower busy wi' mair important maitters, Laird," he said bluntly. "It'll tak' ye a guid while tae mak' yer peace wi' yer Maker."

"We'll agree to differ about that, Ronald," replied the Laird uncomfortably. "You'd have everybody in hell if you had your way of it—barring yourself. That's the worst of you just men."

On the very night during which he died he had the butler to his bedside, and sent his nurse from the room. Though he could only whisper a few words at a time, his mind was still clear, and he was determined that Ronald should repeat his promise that he would act in accordance with his master's wishes.

"Gin it'll gar ye dee in peace, Laird, I'll promise again, though there's nae need. I'll act as referee tae yer wicked wull, without fear or favour, whether it's yer brother Rufus or yer puir niece Jean that wins oot. Can ye hear me, Laird?"

He never knew if Laird Rintoul had heard, for as he bent over the bed to listen for the faint whisper, he found that his old master had died.

CHAPTER XII.

During the hours preceding sunrise—the zero hour of the contest—the furred and feathered inmates of the woods around Dorning House shivered in their burrows or trembled upon their twigs at the unaccustomed and inexplicable activity above or below them. Rab Wilson's quiet ways upon midnight expeditions they were accustomed to, but his insinuating tread was vastly different from the blundering footsteps, the crackling branches, the muttered oaths that penetrated to the depths of every rabbit-hole and rose to the highest branches where the wood-pigeons roosted thickly.

Major McNeil and his party reached Dorning fully two hours before dawn, and left the two cars in which they had travelled on the outskirts of the village. They entered the grounds of Dorning House not by either of the lodge gates, but by scaling a fence leading into a wood at a point to the left of the West Lodge. Even with the aid of Neil's electric torch they progressed slowly, and it was only after much blunder-

ing into trees and tripping over fallen branches that they emerged into the open and struck the carriage drive halfway between the lodge and the house. After that the going was easy, and the party of seven arrived before Dorning House without incident.

The situation within the loop of the Loun was peculiar in this respect, that the drive did not bridge the river at any point, but, taking a sharp curve into the loop, approached the front of the house and then curved out again in the direction of the other lodge gate. The couple of acres surrounding the house and enclosed within the confines of the river were sufficient for the flower and kitchen gardens, while the grounds beyond the river were devoted to park and woodland.

Apparently, therefore, a strong guard in front of the house, stretching from one end of the loop of the river to the other, would effectively stop all approach to the house, but McNeil did not propose to rely upon this natural barrier. There was always the possibility, he thought, that some one would find a means of getting across the river, and he did not mean to take any chances.

Two men posted behind the house, and one on either side, would leave him with a couple to help him hold the front. The pair he chose for what he considered the danger-point, where he intended to be himself, were Televant, the one-eyed man, and Lindsay, the elderly ex-solicitor. The others he disposed around the house, having previously arranged a signal which would bring them all to his assistance should the need arise. McNeil had a very wholesome dread of Rufus Rintoul, and was prepared to expect the unexpected.

It was a weary job waiting in the darkness, less so for Neil than for the others, because he could vary the monotony by making a round of the house, visiting each of his outposts in turn, while they merely shivered in the darkness and longed for the tobacco that their leader had forbidden.

While the Francescans were awaiting, monotonously, the dawn, Rab Wilson the poacher had gone to keep tryst with the Reverend William Murdoch, the parish minister. The latter, strong in his moral rectitude, would have entered the policies of Dorning House openly by the East Lodge, but his fellow-conspirator protested.

"Na, na, Mr Murdoch. There's nae need tae mak' oorsel's conspeecuous, an' forbye, Wullie Fraser the keeper bides in the East Lodge, an' me an' him's no' what ye'd ca' best freends. We'll juist daunder doon the road an' slip ower intae the wuds."

Murdoch was shrewd enough not to argue the point. Just though he felt his cause to be, he had a certain feeling of guilt in his association with Rab Wilson, which gave the whole proceeding a disreputable air that he had not anticipated. In all his imaginings, dodging keepers amongst trees in the

darkest hour before dawn had not appeared to him as amongst the possible activities of a minister of the Church of Scotland. After stumbling on behind his guide for what appeared hours, but was really only minutes, Murdoch found himself on the edge of the wood.

"If ye'll juist lay quait for a wee while, I'll gang forrit an' see if a's clear," whispered Rab in his ear. "I'll be back in nae time."

Murdoch made no demur. He felt very helpless in the darkness, and at the mercy of his incongruous associate.

Rab went forward with the skilful silence of his craft, making for the entrance to the loop of the Loun, already guarded by McNeil and his supporters; and so successful was his advance that, had it not been that he actually blundered into McNeil in the gap, he would probably have slipped through unheard.

"Hullo! Who's this?" exclaimed Neil, grappling the unseen figure in the darkness.

Rab struggled in silence to release himself. He recognised the voice, and felt that, could he but get away unrecognised himself, he held an advantage.

"Show a light here, Televant," cried McNeil as loudly as he dared.

Lindsay and Televant closed in upon the sounds of the struggle, and one of them switched the beam of an electric torch on the captive.

"Why, it's you, Rab!" exclaimed McNeil with a slight laugh. "I'm sorry if I've interfered with your innocent little affairs, but you happen to have butted into something bigger."

The poacher was quick to see, and take advantage of, the construction that McNeil put upon his presence.

"Man, ye fair pit the wind up me," he said. "An' what micht *you* be daein' here? Is't the wee lads wi' the lang lugs ye're after, or—but na, na, I mind what ye telt me. It'll be this business aboot the Laird's will, nae doot. I've fair pit ma fit in it the nicht, but it micht be waur. I thocht ye were a keeper."

"Let me give you a tip, Rab, my lad," said McNeil. "This is no night for your business. There's likely to be too much liveliness in the neighbourhood. If I were you, I'd get quietly off home, and leave the snares to look after themselves."

"I'm thinkin' ye're richt, Neil," agreed Rab, his eyes twinkling unseen in the darkness.

"By the way, you haven't seen or heard any one else about, I suppose?" asked McNeil.

"No' a sowl," replied Rab mendaciously. "Weel, guid nicht tae ye, Neil, and guid luck tae Mr Rintoul."

"Mr Rintoul! You mean Rufus? God forbid!"

"Man, I thocht ye were helpin' him!"

"Far from it, Rab. I'm very much up against that red-

headed gentleman. I work for a lady."

"Dae ye, noo?" said Rab, showing small interest in what was a momentous discovery. "Weel, it's nae odds tae a puir thatcher like masel'. The gentry an' their wyes are beyond ma understandin'. Guid nicht tae ye."

Rab slipped back into the darkness, and returned as quickly as the circumstances would allow to the Reverend William Murdoch.

"Is all clear, Rab?" whispered the latter anxiously.

"Clear! Man, it's as thick as pea-soup," replied Rab. "I doot we've got oor work cut oot for us. Here's Neil McNeil, an' a wheen mair, no' for Rufus Rintoul after a', but warkin' for a ledy. I saw three o' them, an' likely there's mair aboot the house. McNeil wudna pit a' his stock in the winda. We're up agin them, an' we've Rufus agin us forbye. It's a braw look-oot for Miss Jean!"

"He's working for a lady!" repeated Murdoch. "Then this cousin, the Corsican, must be coming. What are we going to do, Rab? It seems pretty hopeless."

"We'll juist ha'e tae bide an' see," replied the poacher gloomily. "Maybe if McNeil's gang gets tae blows wi' Rufus we can slip Miss Jean in. We'll creep up close tae the ithers an' watch oor chance, but it's gye puir."

The Honourable Thomas Owen felt upon his narrow shoulders a tremendous weight of responsibility, and in his heart the glow of a devouring passion. To him had fallen the part of conducting his adorable mistress to her triumph. A powerful car was engaged, and the chaffeur had been instructed in advance in what was required of him, but Bubbly felt that the whole conduct of the affair was in his hands.

Nevertheless he spent the evening in Elysium. To begin with, he dined *tête-à-tête* with Francesca, and they shared a bottle of champagne, and sampled some fine old brandy recommended by the head-waiter. He had the further joy of conducting her to the second house at a music-hall and listening to her exotic comments on the performance. Returned to the hotel, Bubbly suggested that his mistress should snatch a few hours' sleep before setting out upon the journey.

"Sleep, Honourable Owen, sleep!" she exclaimed. "D'ye tak' me for a clod of earth that I should sleep when fortune hangs in the balance? Mio Dio, if only I could have a Guinness — but your silly laws——"

"Signorina, you shall have it. Go to your private sitting-room, and I'll bring it in a brace of shakes," cried Bubbly, eager to be of service.

In view of the licensing restrictions he had laid away a store of the necessities of life in his bedroom, and quickly

appeared with a bottle of stout in each pocket of his dinner-jacket. These, and a game of piquet, of which Francesca was inordinately fond, served to pass the time until the car arrived, and so absorbed had the strange couple been in their game that it had not occurred to them to change into clothing more suited to the expedition. Francesca set out, therefore, arrayed in all the splendour of black satin, and bare shoulders shrouded in a gorgeous opera-cloak of crimson velvet, while her companion concealed his evening clothes beneath a light dust-coat. The car was luxurious, fitted with a limousine body, and lit with shaded electric lamps, so that there was no need for heavier wrappings.

As they shot from the old city into the flat open country, Bubbly gave a great sigh of satisfaction.

"Off at last, Signorina!" he cried. "In two hours more you will be an heiress or I'll be a corpse."

It must be admitted that Bubbly was not strictly sober: he was elevated. Not thick of speech nor stupid, but bright-eyed and full of gorgeous imaginings. This, he felt, was the greatest day of his life, but greater were to follow. She had chosen him from all the others to be by her side at the moment of triumph. All evening she had been more than kind, and now she leant comfortably on his shoulder as they rushed through the darkness, and he felt upon his cheek the softness of the fur upon her collar, and inhaled the intoxicating perfume of her person.

A certain allowance of time had been given for possible stoppages, and, two miles short of Dorning, the car stopped to await the moment for the final rush.

"We are twenty minutes ahead of time, Signorina," declared Owen. "We must wait."

"And I am so thirsty," grumbled his mistress, clasping her jewelled hands together tragically.

"Signorina, I have but one aim in life—to fulfil your every desire. What will you have—stout or brandy?" asked Bubbly with a look of triumph in his eye.

"Oh! Honourable Owen! You are above all the angels!" cried Francesca. "You think of everything. I will have a bottle of stout with a little brandy in it to give it—what do you say—guts?"

"To give it what you will, Signorina," said Bubbly, fumbling under the seat and bringing out bottles and glasses. "You can't go wrong. The more reason why I should take your tip. I'll have a dash of brandy in mine."

He produced from his pocket a flask, filled from the fine old '65 that they had sipped after dinner, and with a generous hand seasoned the two glasses of stout.

"To the fair mistress of Dorning, and—damn all her rivals," cried Bubbly excitedly, standing up and bumping his head on the roof of the car.

"To you, Honourable Owen, the Machiavelli of my staff," returned Francesca, her dark eyes burning, her cheeks glowing with excitement, and also with the share she had had in the night's potations. "And may we never be parted."

"Signorina, do not speak lightly," cried Owen.

He had emptied his glass at a draught, and the glow of the brandy filled his veins with molten fire. He dropped on his knees on the sheepskin rug that covered the floor, and rested his clasped hands in the soft folds of Francesca's skirt.

"Never be parted! Do you mean it, Signorina? Is there a hope for a poor wretch who would gladly spend the rest of his life trodden on perpetually by your little feet?"

The little rose shade in the roof cast a warm glow over the features of Francesca. Her cloak had fallen back, and the splendid curves of her fair neck and shoulders, the swell of her deep bosom, were revealed in all their rich perfection. The Honourable Thomas Owen, on his knees at her feet, was, in essentials, an insignificant creature, but to her, looking down, with her mind filled with romance and her veins with intoxicants, he assumed a form far in excess of his merits.

"Who knows? Who knows?" she said softly, resting one fair hand lightly upon his sandy head. "I promise nothing. I dinna even gi'e you hopes. But you never ken."

Bubbly seized the hand that rested upon his head, and drawing it to his lips covered it with kisses. It was not drawn away. Why should it be? Francesca was in her element in this theatrical situation.

Yet she was the first to return to earth.

"Look at the time—Eccolo!" she cried suddenly, after a glance at her diamond-studded wrist-watch.

"'Struth! You're right, Signorina," said Owen, confirming the time by a glance at his own watch.

The order was given. Bubbly, as arranged, took his seat outside by the side of the chauffeur, and the car started on its last stage.

Meanwhile, at the manse, more modest preparations had been made. Mrs Murdoch had insisted upon Jean going to bed, and, strangely, the girl had slept soundly. She was aroused by a light in her room, and awoke to find Mrs Murdoch, fully dressed in a serviceable coat and skirt, by her bedside.

"The hour has come," said that sprightly matron. "There will be a cup of tea ready in ten minutes; so buck up, Jean."

"It is good of you to get up," said Jean, impressed by

her friend's thoughtfulness. "But you are fully dressed!"

"Of course, silly. I'm going with you. You didn't think I'd let you go out in the middle of the night to pay a call on Mr Ronald Aitken without a chaperon?"

"But little Bill? You can't leave him, and—what will the minister say?"

By this time Jean was out of bed and drawing on a pair of sensible heather-mixture stockings.

"Little Bill is just going to be fed, after which he will sleep for three solid hours. The minister can say what he likes, because it will be too late. Buck up. I'll make the tea and attend to that young dipsomaniac while you are dressing. Cheerio."

She was gone at the word, and Jean hurriedly washed and dressed, unable to shake off that miserable feeling that afflicts all who must rise in the middle of the night.

In the parlour, by the light of two dismal candles, she found Mrs Murdoch with little Bill.

"Kettle—kitchen fire," whispered the young mother, a finger to her lips.

Jean went off to the kitchen and watched the procrastinating kettle boil, while the cockroaches scurried round the floor, keeping as closely to the walls as their business would permit.

When she returned to the parlour with the tea-things, Young Bill had retired, replete.

"It is good of you to come, Clarice," she said gratefully. "I must admit I dreaded the lonely ride, with goodness knows what at the end of it. You are a real good sort."

"Not a bit of it. I want to be in at the death. It's pure selfishness. I want to be the first to congratulate the new mistress of Dorning House on her accession. There's nothing noble about me."

They sat, eating soda-scones and butter, and sipping tea, in silence for the most part. The hour before dawn is not conducive to conversation unless it be an hour stolen from the previous evening. Jean Rintoul looked small and helpless in the dim candle-light, her dainty features overwhelmed by the masses of brown hair that curved above, and her brown eyes strained and startled in the flickering flames. Something of this affected Mrs Murdoch, for, rising from her chair, she crossed the room and put her arms round Jean.

"Dear," she said softly, "I do hope you win. I'm sure it will be no fault of Old Bill's if you don't. Come along, we must get our bicycles."

(To be continued.)

A ROB ROY OF THE DESERT.

BY LIEUT.-COLONEL C. E. VICKERY, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.F.A.

"Since, then, the rule of right is plain,
And longest life is but a day;
To have my ends, maintain my rights,
I'll take the shortest way."

THE province of Kordofan lies south-west of Khartum, between Darfur and the western bank of the Nile. A rolling steppe of sand sparsely covered with bush, it merges in the south into a great plain studded with isolated ranges of hills rising precipitously six hundred to two thousand feet above the ground-level.

The plain itself is covered with light forest alternating with open patches of black cotton soil.

These hills (Jebal Mountains) are inhabited by Nubas, who are closely connected with the Nubas of Nubia, which comprises roughly the tract of country in the Nile valley between Assouan and Khartum. The origin of the Nubian race presents an ethnological question of great difficulty, but the connection between the Nilotic and Kordofan Nubas is conceded, although only the latter preserve in these days their racial purity.

In these Jebal the "baggara" Arab has been wont to winter for many years, for the wells and ponds of Kordofan, as well as the herbage, are exhausted in the late autumn.

In the days of the Egyptian suzerainty the Jebal district was the hunting-ground of the slave-dealer and the Arab raider, hence the Nubas took to their hills, where the Arab horsemen could not pursue them on horseback, and would not venture on foot. They were obliged to terrace their hills for cultivation at infinite labour, for they dared not descend into the plain. There was no confederation amongst these Nuba communities, and each Jebal was a self-contained kingdom.

Some of them are not inhabited by pure Nubas, but by descendants of Fung immigrants. These, unlike the Nuba, who wears no clothes at all and is a pagan, are Mohammedans, and nearly as civilised as the Arab. Of such in the penultimate decade of the last century, in the days of the Mahdi, was Jebal Tagoi, ruled over by its local mek, or king, Ahmed Abdullah.

A rugged range running due north and south, it was about eight miles in length by one broad, crowned by two precipitous peaks separated by a deep and narrow valley.

The Mek Ahmed fell out

with the dervishes, the Caliph's army, and paid the usual penalty, for his hill was sacked, and the inhabitants received the customary oriental treatment: all the young men were killed, the children were sold as slaves, while the young women, if pretty, went to join the already crowded harems of the Caliph Abdullah and his generals.

Over the remnants of the population and the ruined villages a new Mek was appointed, a kinsman of the late Ahmed, one Idris. A year or two later Abdullah summoned Idris to Khartum. During his absence a cousin, Mohammed Gedeil, usurped the throne, and, when he returned, Idris was confronted with *un fait accompli*. There was nothing to be done at the time, so he took refuge with a neighbour, Mek Geili of Tagali, nursing his grievance and biding his time. He sent messengers to Khartum, but the Caliph was busy dealing with the hated infidel who had captured Mahmud and his army at Atbara, and was advancing on Khartum.

Thus Gedeil reigned in peace, and soon a British flag flew over El Obeid, the capital of Kordofan. Month by month the arm of the "Hakumah" (government) lengthened, and more and more of the country was brought under control. Gedeil received visits from strange officers, who would not take presents, as the officials of the old Government did before the dervish days. They seemed in some way, too, to be ordering him to do certain things, and he grew uneasy. Now his hill was a veritable fortress, for the villages nestled at the summit under two peaks which commanded all approaches, and were well supplied with water and grain.

The visits of officials were few and far between, and Gedeil regained his peace of mind, until he was startled, first by the establishment of a government post a few miles from his hill, and later by the appointment of a British inspector.

Soon he was beset with demands to restore stolen slaves, to cease highway robbery, and to appear at the inspector's court. He was ordered to make roads, to improve wells, and to pay tribute.

He, like Gallio, cared for none of these things, and sent only evasive replies.

The inspector visited him at his hill, and so long as he came with a few police only, was a welcome guest at his village. A courteous host, a strict, almost fanatical, Mohammedan, he spent many hours in agreeable conversations with the inspector. There was no result, however, from any of these visits, and the months, and even years, went by, while neighbouring potentates asked why Gedeil should be allowed to defy the Government with impunity.

Finally, Gedeil considered himself strong enough to write a flat refusal to meet the

inspector anywhere except on his own hill. He had disobeyed the Government for several years; he had seen only a few police; what was all this nonsense about a strong "Hakumah"? Why should he worry?

The approaching, and first, visit of the Governor of Kordofan, with his escort of fifty infantry for State purposes, seemed to afford an opportunity to visit Gedeil with a little more pomp and weight of authority than the usual inspector's visit in the company of half a dozen police. The Mek was accordingly informed by the inspector that the Governor was coming to see him. A few days afterwards the inspector met the Governor, who agreed, after reading Gedeil's dossier, to visit the Jebal.

That was a red-letter night for the inspector, for he was on the eve of dealing with Gedeil, who had mocked his authority for three years, and he was in the company again of his own kind. Five days from the nearest Government station, the inspector's life was a lonely one, for he had no other European with him: only a staff of four Egyptian or Sudanese officers and clerks.

The Governor camped near the foot of the hill. The following morning at sunrise, leaving a small guard over the animals and camp, the party started to ascend the hill. The path was steep and rocky up to the summit of the first ridge, where a boulder-strewn, irregular-shaped stretch of open ground led up to the foot of the peaks above mentioned. One could only ascend in single file. At the summit of this ridge we were met by a messenger, who asked if we came in peace or war. We replied in peace, and that Gedeil was to come down and meet us. We advanced slowly, when another messenger ran up to say Gedeil would come down from his post on the peak if all the soldiers withdrew, and only the Governor and inspector remained. This was refused, but he was assured of our peaceable intent. We had advanced only another two hundred yards, when, with dramatic suddenness, a bugle blew out from the peak fortress and the green banner of the dervish army was unfurled, while a tumult of many voices testified to the faith of Islam and to their hatred of the unbeliever.

This was rather more than we had bargained for: we were nicely up on the hill, our camp was below, guarded by two or three police, and our strength was fifty Sudanese and fifteen local police.

It was decided to move on against the village under the first peak, where Gedeil had his battle station. Hostilities having opened, the officer commanding the Sudanese, a versatile and distinguished soldier, took over the control of affairs. He made a flank

movement with his infantry-men to turn the village from the left or south; the police, under the inspector, went forward as a frontal holding attack; the Governor and Sub-Governor went with the infantry.

The police were soon obliged to take cover, for they were sniped at from all sides.

Our intention was to take and burn the village, evacuate at once to our camp, and then to write to Gedeil, pointing out the folly of resisting the Government, and advising him to come and see the Governor, having had evidence of what we could do.

It hardly panned out on these lines.

After having had his Egyptian officer wounded and three police, and since he was surrounded on three sides, with a gap between him and the infantry of over half a mile, the inspector decided to take advantage of the natural cover of the ground to withdraw back on to the ridge where the first messenger had met us. While carrying this out, he saw the infantry falling back slowly at a walk. Eventually the two parties converged on each other, when a council of war was held. The infantry had had a man killed and other casualties (every wounded man meant the loss of four rifles to carry him), and it was agreed that we could not take the village without 70 per cent of casualties, while the moral effect on the neighbourhood had to be considered. Was it better *reculer pour sauter mieux* with a temporary loss of prestige, or risk a disaster with a worse loss? We chose the former. The Sudanese were almost insubordinate at being told to retire, but they were promised their revenge.

The followers of Gedeil had kept up a brisk sniping, and followed us up to a hundred yards of the crest of the first ridge. This the police held while the infantry scrambled down the path, when the police followed, and we reached our camp. The enemy were very unenterprising, and had made no attempt to rush the camp, which was at their mercy. We at once moved back to a camp near the friendly and neighbouring Jebal of Rashad. The stock of the inspector was somewhat low, for it was considered that he had not exactly represented the strength of Gedeil.

Every one sat down that afternoon to write a good story for Khartum, the Governor with great generosity taking all the blame. After dusk we watched the great bonfires on the peaks eight miles away on a clear moonlight night, while the roar of the celebration of the victory was clearly heard.

The following day the Governor and his party continued their tour of the district, flags somewhat at half-mast, which lasted for a week. The Governor then went back to Obeid, and the inspector to his head-

quarters, where he enjoyed thoroughly for the next few weeks the derisive smiles of the neighbouring meks and the semi-impertinent condolences of various Arab sheikhs.

The cheering news arrived in a week or two that a punitive column would be sent from Khartum after the rains, in November, to deal with Gedeil, and the curtain dropped on the first act.

In June the inspector went on leave, returning early in October to make arrangements for the supply of the punitive column and to obtain all possible intelligence as to Gedeil's strength and plans, for submission to the distinguished officer appointed to command the column.

The rendezvous of the column was at Tegali, the headquarters of the district. The inspector marched overland from Kosti on the Nile in company with an advance party of an artillery officer, H., and a few details. It had been a dry summer and water was scarce, while it was still very hot.

One evening the party arrived at a village after dusk, very hot and tired. A single jar of water was all that the village could produce. It was a night when one would have given one's soul for a bath. While the inspector was making arrangements about the jar of water with his servant, and wondering how he could explain to H. why he had taken the only jar of water, he heard the splashing of water. Going in the direction of the noise, he found H. in his bath, with the empty jar by his side. The unsophisticated H. had not thought, from long residence on the Nile, that water was ever scarce, and his amazement and apologies were either a masterpiece of acting or else genuine; in any case they disarmed one. May Allah rest him in his graveyard on the Somme!

On 1st November a force of two battalions, the Camel Corps, a squadron of cavalry, some mounted infantry, and two batteries of artillery were assembled at Tegali. There were also some fifty police and a detachment of the slavery repression police, under the ubiquitous L.

There was a very cheery evening that night. After every one had gone to bed, L., who had been detailed to act as advance-guard next morning in the approach march, woke up the inspector to ask his advice as to the formation that he should adopt. He was roughly consigned to paradise, when he went round the camp waking up others to complain of the inspector. He quickly tired, however, and sought his own bed to ruminate over the poverty of the English language as far as many officers in the Egyptian army were concerned. The next day we marched to Rashad, and, after reconnaissance on the succeeding days, the attack was ordered for the 6th, Gedeil having refused to surrender.

On the night 5/6th the column moved to the foot of Gedeil's hill, Tagoi. No fires were lighted then or in the morning, as the attack was to be a surprise. We had camped in full view for three days, so this was hardly likely; and as the guide carried a large red lamp to indicate his position, a great strain was put on the credulity of the enemy.

The cavalry were sent round to the western slope of the hill, while the attack was made from the east, one battalion being sent to move up a valley which ran through the range to the west of the main peak. This would cut off Gedeil's retreat.

The remainder attacked frontally. There was little opposition, the column had some twelve to twenty casualties, and Gedeil fled from his peak fortress across the valley to the other peak, of which mention has been made. Owing to the nature of the terrain progress had been slow, while one battalion had lost direction, necessitating a long halt. It was therefore not till the late afternoon that the village and fort had been thoroughly searched for stragglers and made good.

It was then too late to attack the second peak. That night Gedeil broke through the cordon of cavalry on the western slope of the hill and escaped.

The second peak was held by a small rearguard, and was taken easily the next morning. Gedeil had his prison on this peak, and one was pointed out the ledge from which people he disliked were invited to jump. There was a sheer drop of 1000 feet before they hit anything.

During the next few days columns scoured the country for Gedeil. His copper war-drum was found and much personal property, but no sign of the monarch. The people began to come in and surrender their rifles.

The column had other work in Kordofan, so it was decided that they should march off, all resistance being over and the people thoroughly repentant, and leave the inspector with one company to clear up and settle down the people under a fresh régime. This was the end of the second act.

For the next six weeks the whole countryside within a radius of twenty-five miles was thoroughly searched for Gedeil. Many were the stealthy marches made by the inspector during the night to round up various places, and always a blank. The majority of the inhabitants quickly drifted back; they had obviously had an object-lesson of the strength of the Government, which would have a lasting effect on them. Idris, from whom, it will be remembered, Gedeil had usurped the throne in the Caliph Abdullah's time, was sent for and installed as Mek. The people all swore allegiance to him, and everything settled

down most satisfactorily, except for the fact that Gedeil was still at large.

It was considered safe, however, to leave the Jebal, so the inspector and the company of infantry departed, both to their own headquarters. The days and weeks went by with no news of Gedeil, while the inspector toured his district, finding himself one day in the early summer with his chief on the southern borders of the province. They had been touring together some few days, enjoying a fair amount of small and big game shooting, when one evening a policeman on a jaded horse rode into their camp. He handed a letter to the inspector. It was from his Egyptian officer left in charge at the district headquarters, and reported that Gedeil had returned to Tagoi, climbed the mountain at night, and attacked the village at dawn, killing Idris. He had been received with great enthusiasm by the people.

From the date of the letter these events had happened forty-eight hours before its receipt. Ordering his police and personal transport to saddle up at once, the inspector read the letter over to his chief.

It was clear to the inspector that he must march at once to Tagoi before Gedeil could obtain any great following, for he was convinced that the vast majority of the inhabitants, after the lesson that they had, would disown Gedeil directly they saw or heard of a Government official in their midst. His chief concurring in these views, the inspector, with his own police, left at once.

Marching throughout the night, at 10 A.M. the following morning the party was at the foot of Tagoi. Dismounting, preceded by the British and Egyptian flags always carried by inspectors in the Jebal, they began the stiff climb of the hill. There was no sign of movement until quite near the village, when a man was seen, who stopped and then came towards us. He turned out to be the son of the Mek Idris. In a very excited state he told us the story. His father Idris had had, apparently, some warning that evening, and had barricaded himself in his house. Gedeil stormed it, killing him, and then went to the mosque, where all the people acclaimed him, amidst the shrill "zagharit" (noise made by Arab women on any joyful occasion) of the women. The success was only very temporary, for the people began to slink off into the hills and plains, fearful of the Government, and yet not daring openly to disobey Gedeil. The latter, realising that he would not hold the people to him, and knowing that news would quickly reach the Government, evacuated the hill twenty-four hours after his arrival. This was the end of the third act. There was only one more.

All the Arabs and local people were mobilised, by

whom every well and water-hole within a radius of fifty miles of Tagoi were occupied. A company of the Camel Corps was sent from Obeid to patrol the northern exits of the district, and particularly the approaches to Jebal Daier, where Gedeil had friends. For ten days the countryside was patrolled, and the wells picketed day and night, but the betting seemed to be on Gedeil again. He dared not clear out of the district towards Kordofan, or to the west where the "baggara" Arabs lived, for in both these regions there were law and order, and he would have been arrested at once by some local Arab sheikh. On the twelfth day the Arabs and local people were beginning to drift away, automatically raising the blockade. That evening a messenger came in announcing the capture of Gedeil by the Camel Corps near J. Daier.

Later, a full report was received to the effect that a patrol of Camel Corps had come on Gedeil's tracks about ten miles from J. Daier. Following them, they passed two dead women, who were recognised as slaves of Gedeil. It was discovered later that he had them speared, because they could not keep up with him. Three miles farther on the patrol came up with Gedeil, dead-beat. He surrendered at once. He stated that they had been unable to fill their water-skins for eight days. He was tried for the murder of Idris and on other charges. The court sentenced him to die.

The letter concluded by asking the inspector where the sentence, if confirmed, was to be carried out. A reply was sent suggesting the headquarters of the district, J. Tegali. The inspector, after demobilising his levies, then went back to the headquarters to await the answer.

Approval of this proposal was received in three days, and in two more Gedeil, escorted by the Camel Corps with a senior political officer from Kordofan, arrived at Tegali. The whole countryside had gathered to see him, for his defiance of Government had lasted many years. The Jebal district of Kordofan was far from being completely under Government control, hence incidents like those of the acts of Gedeil exercised considerable effect on the prestige of the Government.

Gedeil was also a very fervent, almost fanatical, Mohammedan, and as such had a great deal of local sympathy. That afternoon the inspector visited Gedeil in the grass hut, where he was guarded by four police, and communicated the sentence to him.

Gedeil made no comment, and seemed quite unmoved. On being asked if he had any requests to make, he replied, "Oh, inspector, in the days when we were friends, before you asked me to do things which I would not, you used to give me 'Frankesh' bis-

cuits and coffee. I should like some now." His request was of course granted, and two full tins of "Marie" biscuits and much coffee were consumed by the doomed man before sunrise next morning.

A tree in the market-place, which was a natural amphitheatre on the summit of Tegali Hill, was selected for the execution. Here at an early hour Gedeil came with unfaltering step through the square of Camel Corps, while a great multitude watched from many vantage-points. A murmured good-bye to the inspector, and the signal was given, but the rope broke. All round rose a great whisper: "He is a Fiki indeed." It was an awkward moment: a company of Camel Corps, some thousands of spectators, the long story of Gedeil known to them all, and then the Government's rope breaks.

It was quickly repaired, and this time the soul of Gedeil was sped to the paradise which the Prophet has promised his followers. His relatives buried him, and for many months there was much peace in the Jebals.

HENRY: THE RECORD OF A FAITHFUL SLAVE.

BY EVELYN HOWELL, C.S.I., C.I.E.

I SAID, "Why not get a decent car?"

"No," said Alicia. She says that pretty often—in fact, usually. She had the good sense, as I think, to use the alternative monosyllable once, some years ago, and that is what has put her in a position to say "No" now. Anyhow, that is what she said this time

"But look here," I urged. "I have been going through my pass-book, and I find that we are quite rich. Why, we've got——"

I think I will not repeat that splendid figure. We haven't got it now, and there is nothing more uncomfortable than being thought to be richer than you are, unless you are a banker, or otherwise in a position to turn the misapprehension to advantage. It was a good solid figure, quite enough to pay for any kind of car that was likely to suit such insignificant folk as ourselves, and I thought that we should do best to get some durable product of British workmanship. But Alicia would not have it.

"No," she said. "Not a decent car. Dick has a decent car, a very decent car, and you know what happens. Last time I was staying there the car was new, and Dick was very proud of it, and eager to show me what it could do. I was wanting to go over to Chewton, and Dick was all for taking me there. While we were talking about it, Jim drifted into the garage, where we happened to be admiring the shine of her paint and the shape of her bonnet, and so forth. He sat and listened for a bit. Then he suddenly interrupted. 'I say, Dad, have you seen Shilling this morning? He was telling me just now that Mischief' (Mischief is the pony, you know, that Jim and Margaret ride in the holidays)—'that Mischief had pushed down one of the hurdles round the hen-house, and had been scratching himself against the corner of the hen-house roof, and disturbing all the sitting hens, besides helping himself between whiles to hay from your mow.' Dick doesn't care much about the hens, but the mow is his joy and pride. He made it himself, or thinks he did, last summer, and he couldn't bear to hear of it being pulled about. He was off like a shot to find Shilling. As soon as he had gone, Jim turned to me and said, 'Did I hear Dad talking of taking you over to Chewton to-day?' I nodded. 'Well, please don't let him, Auntie Liz; at any rate, not to-day. We call her P.S.—and he pointed towards the car. Penal Servitude, you know. Whenever she goes out, we all have to turn to and clean and

polish her when she comes back again. It rained last night, and the roads are in an awful state. Besides, we have a game of hockey on in Burnham this afternoon. Washing P.S. down after a hard game of hockey is poor fun, I can tell you.' Dick reappeared at this point, and I had to cry off the trip that I had just been crying on. Dick couldn't understand it, and it made him rather cross. I made a vow then and there that we would never get a car that would be a tyrant to us. We have enough masters as it is—at least I know I have,—and you are always saying that you are tired of being anybody's 'obedient servant.' Don't let us buy a tyrant. What we want is a slave. If we get a decent car, as you call it, we shall be slaves to it. You will always be thinking of your paint, and how not to scratch it, and you'll be afraid to put a bicycle up on the what-d'you-call-it, or a heavy box on the grid. You'll never go down a lane for fear of your tyres, or up a hill for fear of your cylinders or something. You'll refuse to take more than three passengers, and you'll put them out to run whenever you get a chance. You won't go out on wet days because of the mud, and you'll stop at home on dry days because of the dust. I know. That won't suit us a bit. We want a car that we can use whenever and however we feel inclined. We want a slave."

Perhaps you can guess the result. It was Henry. I cannot honestly say that he moved me to enthusiasm on first acquaintance, but later on his performances upon the road endeared him to me; and when, only the other day, "just for a handful of silver he left us," I felt quite as much upset about it as ever Browning can have done when he sat down to write that poem. And it was not only that I had hoped to get more for him. I was genuinely sorry to part with the beggar. Besides, his departure spelt the approaching end of my leave and going back to the East and leaving the children behind, and generally wrote "Finis" across the tale of the glorious days that we had in that wonderful summer of 1921. So we were feeling very sad about it, and the children were inconsolable. But it is not that of which I set out to tell you.

The rules to be observed when you decide to buy a car are just as simple and as obvious as the principles of strategy, and just about as difficult to carry into execution. Still there is no harm in knowing what they are. First make up your mind how much you want to pay, and second, how much you are able to pay, if you have to. Then recognise that the higher figure is the one at which you will probably do business. Take a certain amount of trouble to find out which cars, of those selling within your limit, are well spoken of. If you are paying a fairly big price, it really does not much matter which

of the better-known makes you select. The large firms with reputations are probably all giving about the same value for the same money. And a novice can't hope to find short cuts. If you are buying something cheap, take no end of pains to find out from men who own these cars, and look after their cars themselves, what accessories and improvements they recommend. Make a list of these gadgets. Go through your list over and over again, cutting it down as much as you can. When you have got it down to the irreducible minimum, go to the head office of the firm, tell them what you want, and insist on getting it. Do not pay overmuch heed to the smooth talk of the "field-lilies" whom you find in the place. They are not put there nor dressed like that to give you twenty-one shillings' worth for every pound you spend. They are there to sell what their people want to get rid of at the best price they can get. So let them talk, but have your own way. And that is not a bad rule of life in other matters besides buying motor-cars.

If, like me, you aim low, here are some hints which you may find useful. Do not be afraid of a left-hand drive. It makes little or no difference, when once you are used to it. Buy new, not second-hand. Fit your luggage-carrier behind and your spare wheel against the door of the driver's seat. Insist upon detachable wheels all of the same dimensions. Don't be put off with lighter wheels in front. Remember that you are aiming at independence, not at being a peripatetic institute for the support of indigent garage-keepers. Get a brace to fit the head of the bolts, and you ought to be able to change a wheel single-handed in ten minutes. See that the jack in your outfit does not jam, and that the pump really blows. Have your tyres tested for pressure in a garage at least once a fortnight, and keep them taut. Do not waste your time trying to mend small cuts and abrasions in the outer covers, but get anything serious vulcanised at once. Have a hand Klaxon fitted to your left hand. Nothing but a Klaxon can make itself heard above the din of the lorries and road locomotives that you will want to overtake and pass. Keep your Klaxon for them. Have oil side-lamps in case you get ditched, and see that they are not left empty of oil. Get a petrol-gauge and a lubricating oil-gauge, and observe them both continually. Have a disc fitted to your dashboard in direct connection with the head of your carburettor needle, and when on the open road keep it well turned down. Attention to this will reduce petrol consumption by nearly 50 per cent, and improve your running. Fit the locker under the back seat with a wooden lid, hinged halfway forward, so that you can open it without having to throw out the cushion. Have the lid fitted with a hasp and padlock, so that you may leave

your car in any garage all night without much fear for the treasures that you will surely accumulate. Fit a padlock also to your back floor-boards, so that no one but yourself can get at your batteries. See that the tops of these are kept clean and their insides well replenished with distilled water. If your front floor-boards buckle from the heat of the engine, as mine did, scrap them, and have them replaced by floor-boards of honest English elm or other seasoned wood which any village carpenter can make for you. Use no brake or transmission linings other than those which the makers supply. For all that they say in Devonshire or other hilly country, you will certainly burn these out at fairly short intervals. But they can be replaced. A hard lining to the brake and other bands may do serious mischief, and causes the car to buck and jump in very distressing fashion on low gear or reverse. There is a certain make of commutator which requires no oil. Indeed, it must not be oiled. Fit one. It makes starting an easy matter in any weather, and keeps the wiring dry and clean. It is also much longer lived than the regulation pattern, and worth the extra cost. Never use a brush to your paint. Wash the mud off with a hose, and let the car dry in the shade. Then take a little polish to her, and finish up with the chamois leather. Keep your spare wheel in a waterproof cover, and have an apron made for your radiator for use in cold weather, when you leave the car standing. Provide your back seat with a windscreen. It keeps your passengers from perishing in winter, and prevents you from hearing what they say if you do not want to do so. Keep a book, and record in it all mileage, petrol and oil consumption, and all expenditure. It will make most interesting reading for you, but other people may not care about it so much. Get a mechanic's suit of overalls, or use old uniform instead. Plunge in and don't be afraid of black grease. There is no kind of motor dirt that petrol followed by soft soap and soft water will not fetch off in a few minutes.

I wish I had known all this when Henry and I first met. But wisdom is like old age. It comes on very gradually, and there are those who seem able to stave off the advances of both almost indefinitely.

After Henry had been with us for some weeks, the coal strike began. But there was never any hint of difficulty about petrol. In fact, the price of petrol was twice reduced by sixpence a gallon while the coal crisis was raging. I suppose the petrol syndicates were trying to help in the national emergency. You can put it down to that if you like. I have no information to the contrary. And the weather was such as to predispose towards guilelessness—day after day the same glorious sunshine. The varied beauties of the

spring were a never-failing banquet of delight. It was the first spring that I had seen in England for seven years, and

> "Why in that dawn 'twas good to be alive,
> But to be young'

was, no doubt, as Wordsworth says, "very heaven." It always is, if only the young but knew. Even to be middle-aged was not so bad. What fun we had with our Henry! He would run like Elijah, once he could be got to start. But at that time I used to have inordinate difficulty in getting him to start. This was not altogether his fault, let me explain. Our Henry, like his Royal namesake of Windsor,

> "though unfortunate,
> Assure yourselves, was never yet unkind."

But amateur driving on Devon hills had been too much for his original set of brake linings. So I had been compelled to have the brake relined, and there being no service depot within reach, the work had perforce been entrusted to a local garage. It involved the taking down and reassemblage of the electric self-starter, with the result that that useful appliance was out of order, except when the engine was hot, and starting consequently an easy matter. However, I bear no malice about it. For the dilemma thus created gave rise to a very pretty psychological problem, which worked itself out on this wise. One day, for instance, Henry would refuse point-blank to budge. That being so, it was obviously out of the question to take him to the service depot, or, indeed, anywhere else. Next day perhaps he would make no serious demur, and off we would go, full of resolution to go straight to where skilled attention was to be had. But on the way he would behave so admirably, and, the engine once warm, the self-starter would be so infallible, that resolution would fade, and we would drift off down some alluring byroad, and not get home till evening. So things went on.

All the same, Henry's uncertain temper, while it lasted, was a distinct nuisance, and we had some bad days. For example, there was the *dies nefastus*, on which I undertook to get Alicia's young brother in to Exeter in time to catch the Severn Tunnel express, which was his only hope of making the journey back to school in Lancashire in the day. Every blessed thing went wrong that day. To begin with, Henry would not start until it was almost too late, and then we had to go too fast. So I came by an ugly dent on my off-wing, trying to squeeze past a steam-roller, unattended, which seemed to have been left to block a narrow lane. Then the fan-belt worked loose, and the engine overheated and started firing irregularly. Then we got a puncture, and the Stepney —that was before we got the detachable wheels — had not kept its exact circular shape.

So we made the rest of the run into Exeter boiling, misfiring, and bobbing up and down on one wheel, as if it had been an egg. Of course we were too late for the train, or should have been, but that, by the grace of God, its time had, without warning, been put back an hour and a quarter. On the way back an ash from the General's pipe (the General is Alicia's father) set light to the cushions in the back seat. Alicia, thinking that she and her father were going to be roasted alive, seized a thermos full of coffee and milk, and upset it into the place of burning and many other places. It stayed the conflagration, but it made the upholstery sticky in unexpected parts for days after. To crown all, in the evening, when I was taking the two children and Miss Raynes for a joy-ride, Henry's ailments having been set right, Mary (my daughter, aged six) got her finger pinched in the door, and not unnaturally yelled blue murder, while Bob (aged seven), who is of an inquiring turn of mind, and interested in the animal kingdom, reduced, for different reasons, both Miss Raynes and me to the same condition of speechlessness, by asking her whether she recognised certain cows as young ones, because they had such small bosoms. But that perhaps was not Henry's fault. Poor Miss Raynes! She is a friend of Alicia's, who was staying with us. Long residence in some horrible suburb of South London has cramped her outlook on life until she may be said to be suffering from malignant Penge in its direst form, and she is no match for Bob in the art of polite conversation. However, the bad days were very much the exception, and even they are not so bad now in retrospect.

Of the good days I recall with especial joy one spent upon Dartmoor, with an archæologist aboard, who showed us most curious things amid glorious scenery; another, when we picnicked on the top of Hembury Fort, and another on Telegraph Hill, between Exeter and Newton Abbott; the day on which we shifted our menagerie from Devon to Somerset, and went over the Black Down Hills to Taunton; several days spent upon the London road, as occasion took us to and fro and, above all, seven days spent among the battlefields of France, a pilgrimage to the great shrine of the modern world, that left me very proud of being an Englishman, and very ashamed of being a live one.

Perhaps you would care to come for a run through a part of Somerset, of which I am very fond? It shall be one of the good days, I promise. Shall we make a round by Glastonbury and back over the Polden Hills? Very good; come along.

For the first few miles we go among rich flat meadows, for the most part bounded by broad deep ditches, locally

known as "rhines," instead of hedges, and the road, for all its flatness, swings round the points of the compass in most irritating fashion, explicable only on the theory that it follows the line of an old footpath across the marshes. This is indeed the fact. Much of this land, now famous as some of the finest pasture in England, is below sea-level, and has only been reclaimed since the sea-wall was built and drainage undertaken. It is indeed as much the work of men's hands as any factory or dock, and how the "single-taxers" would deal with it, were they in a position to impose their theories on the community, I do not know. However, we cannot stop to argue about taxation. Let us try some pleasanter subject. If it were Dick, of whom we spoke above, driving you in his decent car, he would regale you at every turn with local lore and legend of the most charming. It was Uphill, which we are now approaching, that reminded me of Dick. He says that, although the Mendips do here come down to the sea and the road does consequently leave the level and ascend, the name has nothing to do with either "Up" or "Hill." It is really "Hubba Pill" or Hubba's Pool. The pool is a little tidal basin at the mouth of the Axe. The Romans, we know, used it as a harbour. For their road over the Mendips from Old Sarum come straight down to it, and their fort on Brean Down, commanding the Bristol Channel, might well have been built to protect it.

Hubba was a famous Danish sea-rover of the ninth century. Before they made good their hold on the north-eastern parts of our island, the Danes and Norsemen used a route round the North of Scotland, and so into the Irish Channel, as a secondary line of attack upon their Anglo-Saxon kinsmen. From a base in Ireland they were able to harry the West of England far more effectively than they could have done by operating direct from home. In matters of this sort history, as we have cause to know, has a tendency to repeat itself. Hubba, who seems to have been an intelligent pirate, went one step further, and established an advanced base on the islands of Steep Holm and Flat Holm, which lie off this part of the Somerset coast, and, be it noted, still keep the Danish name of "Holm." From these islands Hubba made descent after descent upon the mainland. Having the command of the sea, he could choose his own time and place, and for a long time he was uniformly successful. But the pitcher that goes to the well in the end is broken, and Hubba came once too often. It was in the year 878, the same year in which King Alfred took refuge in Athelney, and afterwards defeated the Danes at the great battle of Ethandune. In this year, presumably before Ethandune, Hubba made his last descent and landed at Uphill. The inhabitants did

not attempt to oppose his landing, but fled inland, taking their cattle with them. Now in those early days, so Dick is fond of saying, it was not so generally well known as it is now, that although Englishmen, like other men, do at times run away, it is not as a rule prudent to follow them too closely or too far. Hubba did not know this, or perhaps habitual success had made him careless. Anyhow he left his ships and followed hot-foot, without either leaving a guard at the pool or clearing the villages which lay near it. Now in one of these villages there lived a crusty old dame who declined to flee inland with the rest. I dare say she did not even take the trouble to go and hide. I think she must have been rather like an old woman whom I had the honour of meeting in Flanders. She got into trouble with the Divisional authorities for continually cutting the signallers' wires, in the back area, where they crossed her land. I, being supposed to have a knowledge of the language, helped the A.P.M. to deal with her. Her defence was a triumph of rhetoric: "D'abord les Allemands," she said, "alors les Belges, puis les Français, après les Anglais, et enfin les Hindous. N'aime pas les militaires."

Somehow the old woman of Uphill escaped the Danes, and when they had all passed, she took a stout hatchet and waddled off down to the pool by herself. There she had no great difficulty in starting a plank or doing other vital damage to each of the ships, and so came home again. Hubba meanwhile had come up with the fugitives inland. Perhaps their cattle made them slow. Faced with the choice between farther flight and fight, they chose the latter, and fought to such purpose that Hubba came off second best, and had to fly to his ships. When he reached them he found them all unseaworthy, thanks to the old lady and her hatchet, to say nothing of his own carelessness. So he in turn had to stand and fight another battle, from which neither he nor any of his men came off alive. In the museum at Taunton you may see, preserved in glass cases, several small pieces of human skin, about the size of the palm of your hand. These, before they were taken down and put in the museum, had been for centuries nailed to the doors of various churches in Somerset, and there is no good ground for rejecting the local tradition with regard to them which says that they were parts of the skins of Danes taken prisoner in these raids and flayed alive by their captors in the nearest churchyard.

While I have been telling you this old tale, the car has been running on, and we are through Banwell and Churchill and approaching Burrington Combe. Did you ever hear of Augustus Toplady? He was an eminent Anglican divine of the eighteenth century, and the author of the well-known

hymn "Rock of Ages." The hymn was first published in the 'Gospel Magazine' in 1775, but the story goes that Toplady composed it years before, when he was curate at Blagdon, the next village beyond Burrington. One day while walking in Burrington Combe he was overtaken by a violent thunderstorm, and the cleft in the limestone wall of the combe in which he took shelter (and incidentally composed his masterpiece) is still pointed out to visitors. How far the story is accredited I have not ascertained, but it seems to be generally accepted; for some sort of commemoration was held on the spot this summer, and was attended by a bishop and other members of the clergy. At any rate, it seems likely that the hymn was composed long before it appeared in print. For it breathes a very beautiful spirit of devotion, and in the year 1775 Toplady's heart was filled with very different emotions. Earlier in life he had been much attracted to John Wesley, and the two men had corresponded in a friendly manner. Later on, however, Toplady took up a position of extreme Calvinism, and in 1769 he published a tract, or rather a translation of a tract, by Jerome Zanchius, on Calvinism. Wesley reviewed this work, and summed up his review in the following lines:—

"The sum of all this: one in twenty (suppose) of mankind are elected: nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will: the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can. Witness my hand. A(ugustus) T(oplady)."

Toplady never forgave this, and for the next six years the two reverend gentlemen were at it hammer and tongs, until Wesley, perhaps not holding his initial advantage, declared that he would "fight no more with chimney-sweepers." But Toplady would not give over the contest, and in 1776 had the satisfaction, such as it was, of showing in his 'An Old Fox Tarred and Feathered,' how in his adversary's 'Calm Address to the American People,' passage after passage had been borrowed, without acknowledgment, from 'Taxation no Tyranny,' by Samuel Johnson. Well, well, it is to be hoped that they have got to the bottom of the matter now and shaken hands over it in the Elysian Fields. Burrington Combe, anyhow, is still there to witness if I lie, and a very beautiful place it is, with the road winding up from the valley of the Yeo right on to the top of the Mendips, near Black Down, the highest point of the range.

Now you see why it is that we have come this way, though it is not the shortest. We will not go up on to the topmost point itself. We shall get just as good a view over the Bristol Channel and across to the hills of Wales, if we run on about half a mile and then walk up to the next peak, which is also the next highest on Mendip. We shall there be within a stone's-throw of the little hamlet of Charterhouse-on-Mendip,

but the interest of the place lies, not in any Carthusian remains, but in the lead-mines. These have been worked from prehistoric times until within living memory, when foreign competition, on less exploited soil, killed the industry. The Romans made great use of these mines, and the traces of their workings can be seen here and in several places beside their great road, of which we saw the terminus at Uphill. There have been innumerable Roman finds here, including a very large number of what appear to be metallic counters. No doubt in Roman times the mines were worked by slave labour. Handling lead, in spite of all the protection that a professedly humanitarian age can afford, remains a pretty deadly occupation, even in the twentieth century. What the mortality must have been among the Roman slave-gangs is difficult to imagine. The place must have been a hell upon earth. Wherever desperate men are herded together, you will find them gambling, whether they have anything to play for or to pay in or not. And this, we may reasonably conjecture, is the explanation of these counters. They represent the sole interest in life that those poor devils of slaves had, and were, I dare say, hidden from the guard, and hoarded, and stolen, and played for just as zealously as if they had been gold pieces.

All through the Middle Ages mining on the Mendips continued both for lead and zinc. Indeed, in the time of the Wars of the Roses the industry was so important that on one occasion King Edward the Fourth, by a curious anticipation of our most modern political practice, had to send his Lord Chief-Justice, Lord Justice Choke, to settle an industrial dispute between the miners and the mine-owners. The award was given at Green Ore, in the presence, so it is said, of no less than 10,000 interested spectators. Our onward way will take us past Green Ore. It lies at the point where our Roman road crosses another ancient route leading from Bath to Exeter. But before we go farther, we might do worse than halt here for lunch. We can see Henry meekly waiting beside the road, and another half-hour's cooling after his climb will do him no harm. Look well round at the landscape before other less remote, though in their way not less pleasing, objects claim your attention. The view is one which would be hard to beat anywhere. Looking north you see first the pall of smoke hanging over the great city of Bristol, less than twenty miles away. But the town itself is for the most part built upon low ground and hidden by Dundry Hill. From Bristol to the south-west is the great broadening sweep of the silver Channel, a dancing-floor of the winds, on which the play of lights and shadows is never still. Its surface is streaked with the fierce tides that carry its waters hither and thither, working year in and

year out to scoop out new deeps and throw up fresh shoals in unexpected places. According to the returns of the Board of Trade of the wrecks that occur round the coasts of the United Kingdom, if we may still call it by that name, one in every ten happens in the Bristol Channel. The main *massif* of the Mendips, on which we are standing, sinks gently downwards to the west into the rich valleys of the Yeo and the Axe. But there are queer outliers here and there, like Nyland Hill and Brent Knoll, between us and the sea, and the main line of the hills is carried on to the west by Callow Hill, Fry's Hill, Wavering Down, Crook Peak (a great mark for mariners), Bleadon Hill, and Brean Down, right to the water's edge. The two islands, Steep Holm and Flat Holm, seem to mark a continuation of the same range half-way over to the coasts of Wales, along which the three big towns of Barry, Penarth, and Cardiff make an almost unbroken rampart of buildings. Inland, on the Welsh side, the country rises rapidly, and carries the eye to range beyond range of mountains.

To the south we look across wide flat levels of rich green pastures, which once were the inland seas that gave their name to the county of Somerset, the land of the "Seo-mere-saetan," or dwellers by the sea-lakes. Away to the south are the Black Down Hills, the watershed between rivers that run north through Somerset into the Bristol Channel and streams that flow south through Devon into the English Channel. To the south-west is the great wall of the Quantocks, beyond which on a clear day may be seen the high head of Dunkery Beacon and the heather-clad hills of Exmoor. If you look closely, you can trace through the valley at our feet the line of the river Parrett from the sea to the town of Bridgwater. The Parrett was for more than a generation the border-line between advancing Saxon and retreating Briton, and still marks an ethnological frontier easily discernible to the practised eye. From Bridgwater let your gaze pass eastwards along the long low crest of the Polden Hills, which stand up in the middle of the valley. Between us and the inland end of the Polden Hills, three or four miles short of it, you may see a curious isolated conical hill, about five hundred feet high, capped by a tall tower. That is Glastonbury Tor, and at its foot are the ruins of the great abbey, once the Mecca of all England.

"Aren't you good people ever coming to lunch?" says Alicia, who, practical as ever, has meanwhile set out a tempting array of good things. There is nothing so good as a good meal in the open on a fine day, and if I cannot be present in the flesh to take part, I confess that, like Thackeray, I enjoy a "power of good eating" in my books. So fall to and make haste — for there is no time to linger now. I am not

even going to let you stop in Wells and look at the Cathedral. It may sound brutal, but it is really wise. No person of discernment, having once alighted in Wells, can possibly continue his journey for at least three hours. So if we are going to Glastonbury and coming back along the Polden Hills, according to plan, we must leave Wells for some other day.

No good Somersetshire man questions the Glastonbury legend which tells how—

"The cup, the cup itself from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with His own :
This from the blessed land of Aramat,
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying, brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord."

The original thorn is said to have sprouted from Joseph's staff, which, on his first landing —for the place was then an island in the inland sea, "the island valley of Avilion,"—he plunged into the ground on Weary-All Hill, and the place in which it is believed to have stood is marked by an inscribed stone. Whatever its origin, it did flourish mightily for centuries, and did no doubt act up to its reputation. At any rate, its descendants do, if trees budded or grafted from the original can be so described. They are hawthorns of a twice flowering variety, and blossom in May as well as at the winter solstice. It was at the Reformation that the blow fell. Dr Layton, who was sent by Thomas Cromwell into Somerset to inspect monastic buildings, reported to his master, apparently with reference to this tree: "By this bringer I send you Relics: first, two flowers wrapped in black sarsnet, that on Christen Mass Even, *hora ipsa qua Christus natus fuerat*, will spring and burgen, and bare blossoms." Dr Layton, for all his tenderness towards the cult which it was his business to destroy, did not spare the tree. It is reported that the daring zealot who plied the axe was miraculously injured by a splinter, but the story seems ill attested, and anyhow supernatural protection proved no more efficacious to preserve the thorn than to save the numerous early Christian martyrs of whom we read that their agonies were prolonged by the fire refusing to light, or the water to boil, or the rope breaking at the first attempt. Bishop Goodman of Gloucester, writing at the time of these events, says: "The White Thorn of Glastonbury which did usually blossom on Christmas Day was cut down, yet I did not hear that the party was punished. Certainly the thorn was very extraordinary: for at my being there I did consider the place, how it was sheltered: I did consider the soile, and all other circumstances, and yet I could find no natural cause."

But the thorn was not the sole attraction to the pious pilgrim of the Middle Ages. St Patrick is believed to have been a native of Glastonbury,

and to have retired there, at the age of ninety, after his work in Ireland was finished. His tomb was shown near the altar of the church known as the "Old Church," which in course of time was replaced by the building now commonly called St Joseph's Chapel. This was originally a separate church, built after the great fire of 1184, on the spot where the old church had stood, but later a flight of steps was placed at its east end, and it was united with the magnificent church of St Peter and St Paul, which dates from the same period. After its inclusion as part of the abbey church it was treated as a Lady Chapel. This involved no dispossession of St Joseph. For the name is a modern accretion, and the church had in fact all along, like that which it replaced, been dedicated to St Mary. St Dunstan was in his time Abbot of Glastonbury, and many relics connected with him were to be seen there, though his tomb was elsewhere. Then there was the Arthurian legend, which became so potent that in 1177 King Henry II. found the coffins of King Arthur and his queen buried in the neighbourhood, and removed them to the church. Eighty years later Edward I. and Queen Eleanor visited the abbey, and on the occasion of their visit the bones were once more moved, and placed with great ceremony in a tomb before the high altar.

All this perhaps means no more than that the place was held in high esteem, after the manner of the age, as the earliest centre of Christianity in the island. But, legend apart, in the days of its magnificence, Glastonbury must have been a wonder. The great church of St Peter and St Paul was 400 feet long and 80 feet wide. To judge by the single arch which yet remains standing, it must have been as graceful as it was grand, and the stone carving was of a richness and beauty unsurpassed. Of late years a good deal of excavation has been done, and many interesting discoveries have been made. Not the least interesting feature of the operations is the fact, if fact it be, that the work has been "controlled" (in the psychic sense) by a disembodied intelligence that purports to be one of the old monks, and so is naturally in a position to give useful information.

The tale of the downfall of the great abbey is pitiful reading. The last abbot, Richard Whiting, was appointed in 1524. The choice was made by no less a person than Cardinal Wolsey himself, to whom the monks had committed the task of selection. It was highly approved by the brethren, of whose number Richard Whiting already was. But perhaps his discipline was a little too good. For when, a few years later, dissolution came under consideration, although the commissioners reported well of Glastonbury and of the rule of Abbot Richard, many of the monks deserted of their own accord

before the broom was applied. Abbot Richard himself took the oath of supremacy to the king. But Henry's "royal temper," as Cromwell calls it, was not to be balked by a trifle like that. A book opposing his divorce from Catherine was found in the monastic library. The abbot was arrested, on the strength of this damaging fact, on a charge of high treason, conveyed to London, and lodged in the Tower. Eventually he was brought back to Wells, where a nominal trial was held. He was, of course, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged, together with two of his faithful monks. The sentence was duly carried out, so the contemporary account says, on Tor Hill, overlooking his abbey. But as the abbey is not, as a matter of fact, visible from the top of Tor Hill, the actual place of execution is now regarded as uncertain. Of the fact there is unhappily no doubt.

After the Dissolution the abbey buildings for long shared the common fate. The roofs stripped of their protecting lead, and the walls used as a quarry for building-stone, they disintegrated rapidly. But in the early years of the present century events took an unusual turn. The abbey site, together with what was left of the buildings, was put up to public auction. The sale excited much interest. One rumour had it that Rome was prepared to buy, while others whispered of American magnates, who meant to transplant and re-erect the ruin amid the congenial surroundings of God's own country. None of these exciting things, however, came to pass. Through the generosity of a private benefactor the site with the ruins was secured for the Church of England, in whose reverent care it remains, a national heritage.

But the lengthening shadow of the still standing arch warns us that we must not linger. We follow the old Roman road as far as the village of Street, whose name betrays its location. Then we turn right-handed through Ashcott, and up a steep incline on to the long level crest of the Polden Hills. The setting sun shines straight through the screen as we go westward, and makes driving difficult. There is the long hour of English twilight before us, and we can afford five minutes. Let us halt : look at the landscape. It is worth looking at. That village a few miles away due south of us, nestling at the foot of the hill, is Aller, where Guthrum and the other Danish leaders were baptised, after their defeat at Ethandune, as part of the terms of peace. It is a pity that Foch did not think of something similar when he had his chance. If you go into Aller Church, you may see the very font which, so tradition says, was used for the ceremony. Beyond Aller to the south-west is the Isle of Athelney, where Alfred lay before the battle. There is little left to see there now, but two miles nearer this way, at the junction of the

rivers Tone and Parrett, stands a large earthwork, still known as King Alfred's Fort, which must have been a strong place in its day. It is not at all unlike the position at Nasiriyah on the Euphrates, out of which the Turks were driven in July 1915. The whole of the valley between us and the Parrett is known as Sedgemoor, and the scene of the last battle on English soil is almost in a direct line between us and the town of Bridgwater, whose roofs and chimneys can just be discerned against the evening sky.

So on over Puriton Hill and down into the level country to the place whence we started out this morning. Other and more violent forms of bodily exercise provide thrills of their own with which motoring has nothing to compare. But there is no way of winning the gift of sleep more sure or more delightful than to spend such a day as we have spent exploring our own country in God's fresh air.

If you doubt me, O my brethren overseas, who are drinking the waters of the extreme Tanais, and wondering what to do with your next leave, buy a car yourselves when you get home and try.

Perhaps a few facts and figures may be of use to you. They are taken from the book of Henry, of which I made earlier mention. I owned Henry for 234 days, and his upkeep and repairs for that period cost me almost exactly the same number of pounds. For that outlay he carried me (and other people and things) 6850 miles in England and 450 miles in France. On an average he covered 20 miles to each gallon of petrol consumed. I could have improved this very much if I had known sooner about the disc on the dashboard arrangement. The amount of oil consumed was 23½ gallons. I reckon that Henry saved me not less than £50 in necessary railway fares, and at least as much again in other incidental expenses of railway travel, luggage, tips, taxi-hire, &c. The price for which I sold Henry fell short of that which I paid for him by £165. But, then, the bottom was knocked out of my market by a general reduction in the price of new cars. On the whole I cry content—aye, and as I look back, far more than content. I feel towards Henry as at the end of a good season I have felt to a horse that has carried me bravely, and so I bid him farewell. I can imagine that in the day when the silver cord is loosed, a man, or that part of him which survives, might hold much the same language to his outworn body. "Goodbye, old comrade. You were a bit of a rogue, you know, in some ways. You never really did quite all that you ought to have done, and you let me down pretty badly once or twice. But I cannot honestly say that this was altogether your fault. Taken all round, you were a faithful slave, and, anyhow, we had some astonishingly good times together."

THE PEOPLE OF THE CAMEL.

BY FULANAIN.

WITH the exception of the Ma'adan, or Marsh-dwellers, the tribes of Mesopotamia fall into two broad divisions—the People of the Desert, and the People of the Fields. From these divisions come the townsmen, fortunately few in number, for on the whole the town atmosphere seems to stifle all the good and encourage all the bad qualities of the Arab character.

The People of the Desert scorn cultivation in any form. They are camel-owners, breeders of fine horses, keepers of vast flocks of sheep and goats, which roam the wide plains in search of grazing. Fierce and proud, they adhere rigidly to strict tribal custom. Intolerant of others, yet renowned for their hospitality, they live the simple patriarchal life.

The People of the Fields are poor and hard-working, but as a rule cheerful and contented, easy as to their morals, grateful for any small service done them. Oppressed by their shaikhs, and despised by the People of the Desert, they eke out a precarious livelihood as growers of wheat and barley, or perhaps toil in the moist paddy-fields, or cultivate vegetables in a narrow strip of land running alongside a river or canal.

Yet they too were once People of the Desert, until, driven forth from their pasture lands at some stage of their history by a great drought or other disaster, they were led, like the Children of Israel, to exchange, in the words of Professor Myres, "their nomad, pastoral, patriarchal life, with its simple needs and economies, and almost complete seclusion from the troubles of the world, for a Land of Promise, which, like all the paradises of the Nearer East, only yields its fruit to arduous toil and anxious 'thought for the morrow'; where the man without capital is ruined by a late frost; where hired labour is the sole alternative to slavery; where even the 'good land' can only be won by fighting, and held by intrigue and oppression of the conquered, 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.'"

This gradual change from a wandering to a settled life is still going on, and can be seen in many of the tribes of Mesopotamia to-day. It is with such tribes, still pastoral, but nevertheless tied to their crops and therefore only half-nomadic, that these stories, based on actual occurrences during the British Occupation, have to do.

Calling themselves, and fiercely proud of being, "the People of the Camel," yet, because they have tasted of

the fruits of cultivation, they are doomed, in the course of a few short generations, to become as the tillers of the soil, whom they now so heartily despise.

THE FATHER OF BUNDS.

Haji Mohammed bin Ali awaited the decision of the Political Officer. His fine old face was seamed and lined with countless wrinkles, and his neatly-trimmed beard was white with age; but in the eyes which looked out under his bushy brows was the clear strong gaze of one used to wide spaces, a steadfast brightness undimmed by years.

"I am in thy hands," he said simply. "Thou knowest that my honour is at stake; a guest robbed in my madhif——"

His words were cut short by the bursting open of the office door. Pushing aside the two farrashes who would have restrained him, a tall angry figure strode in, his brown aba streaming behind him, and the checked red kafiah on his head pushed to one side. Before he reached the office table, he had burst into a torrent of excited speech.

Old Mohammed rose to his feet, and stood uncertain whether to go or stay; for this was his overlord, the great Shaikh Najim, ruler of all the tribes of the Albu Hassain. What could have happened to render him oblivious of all the formalities of an interview with the Hakim, to make him thus forgetful of all his dignity and state?

"Sahib," cried the newcomer, his voice quivering with anger, "before all my tribesmen I was turned away from the bund—called ignorant and of no account,—bidden depart as one having no knowledge! I, who am called the Father of Bunds, who since I was no taller than my youngest son Zamil——"

A short middle-aged man who had followed the shaikh into the room now touched his elbow, said a few words in his ear, and led him to a bench.

It was his mullah, a member of a class of Arab society whose power, in the next generation, is doomed to wane. At present he is indispensable to his master, for only in very rare cases can a shaikh conduct his own correspondence. In the past, when inter-tribal warfare was rather the rule than the exception, a man might be a powerful shaikh one day and a landless fugitive the next. He had no spare time for the education of his sons in any arts save those of war, and the young Arabs of noble birth grew up, from the time they were able to sit a horse, trained to wield the sword rather than the pen. Should the British leave to-morrow, however, the Occupation has already ensured one thing—that the boys who are the shaikhs of the future have all, during the five years'

security and peace, learned to read and write their own language. Meanwhile, the mullah, in his capacity of secretary and confidant to the shaikh, often possesses considerable power, and is sometimes, with good reason, more feared among the tribesmen than the shaikh himself.

Of the two men now before the Political Officer, however, there could be no question as to which was the ruling spirit. In spite of his sixty years, the tall commanding figure of Najim, his deep-set eyes and proud stern features, showed plainly that Mullah Sulman might be a trusted clerk, even a chosen mouthpiece, but could not be more. He knew, nevertheless, that his master was a man of deeds, not words; and now, thinking quite rightly that the Political Officer had some difficulty in following Najim's incoherent exclamations, took up the tale himself.

The mullah was, emphatically, a man of words. His periods were long and his language flowery, and the story promised in his hands to be a lengthy one. Shaikh Najim, wrapping his aba more closely round him, sat grim and silent while the tale of his grievance was slowly unfolded.

Briefly, it was this. Every year in the spring, when the snows melt on the northern mountains, the river rushes down in flood, swollen to many times its ordinary volume, and heavy with silt. If it were not for the earthen bunds which the Arab builds along the banks to protect his crops, many miles of land on either side of the river-bed would be submerged. Only too often the rushing water finds a weak place in the bund, and breaks a way through; and this had now happened at Al Juzra. At once Najim had collected his tribesmen, brought up the material for repairing the breach, and himself ridden to the spot to direct operations. Then on the scene had appeared a "Muhendis," by which term the Arab designates any one possessing engineering experience; in this case it was an Irrigation official, full of youthful zeal and recently-acquired text-book knowledge. Ignoring Najim, he ordered the tribesmen to leave the broken bund, and set to work on building a new one farther back from the river.

Najim expostulated, ordered the men to go on with their work, said (with perfect truth) that in the days of the Muhendis' grandfather he had been responsible for this bund, and that for five-and-forty years he had repaired it whenever necessary.

"Much more said his honour the shaikh," continued the mullah, and the Political Officer, knowing Najim of old, smiled to himself.

But the harangue was wasted on the Muhendis. Through an interpreter he addressed the angry shaikh somewhat as fol lows:—

"My dear old fellow, I don't

understand a word you say; but as you obviously know nothing about bunds, perhaps you will kindly clear out, and leave me to run the show."

The interpreter did not mince matters. Speechless with rage, Najim turned on his heel, mounted his pony, and set out straightway on the two days' journey to lay his case before the Political Officer.

"Before all my people was it said," muttered the old shaikh. "I, who am called the Father of Bunds——"

The Political Officer knew better than to attempt to minimise the affair in Najim's eyes, or to treat it as anything but a serious matter. He promised to look into the case himself, and the old man left the office somewhat mollified.

The Political Officer turned to Haji Mohammed, who had been patiently waiting for the settlement of his own less exalted business.

"Is he indeed known among you as the Father of Bunds?" he asked.

"Aye, he has long been called by that name," replied Haji Mohammed, "but many there be who call him Abu Mayitain, the Father of two Dead Men."

"A strange title! How came he by it?"

"That will I tell to your honour," said Mohammed, tucking up his feet under him on the high bench, and settling down to his tale with a sigh of pleasurable anticipation.

In the black hair tents of the desert, where narrative by word of mouth has still to serve for novel, drama, and newspaper, the post of story-teller is an honourable one; and the simple, almost Biblical language, the dignified and restrained gestures of the old tribesman, brought the breadth and freshness of wind-swept spaces into the dingy office.

"In the year after the death of Ghadhban in the fight against Kharaibat," he began, "my sister's husband desired to lease the lands of Khazainah from Shaikh Najim. Now this is good rich land, and free from salt; but wellnigh every year the river overflows its banks and breaks through the bunds, flooding the greater part. For this reason the land was leased out for only a quarter its value, and Abdulla, the husband of my sister, offered the sum of two hundred liras to the shaikh. But Najim was in need of money; for the last two years the crops had been poor, his revenue was heavily in arrears, and the Turks were pressing for payment. He would not lease the land for less than six hundred liras.

"'Were I but sure that my crops would be safe from flood,' said Abdulla, 'willingly would I pay this sum, for the land is good land. But thou knowest that not more than one year in seven is the harvest safe.'

"'This,' said Najim, 'shall be the seventh year.'

"'Dost know the rise of the river before ever the rains begin to fall, or the high snows

to melt upon the hills?' asked Abdulla.

"'This year no floods shall cover the land of Khazainah. I, Najim bin Musa, have said it. I will build a great bund that shall safeguard the crops, let the river rise as it will.'

"'But if the bund should break?'

"'I have spoken,' said Najim. And he swore a great oath, by Allah and by his Prophet and by his own honour, that the land should be safe that year.

"So Abdulla took the land, and at the first rain he ploughed and sowed, and the young wheat stood green as far as the edge of the desert.

"Shaikh Najim built the bund, of trodden earth faced with 'ghimir,'[1] the work of many tribesmen for many days. Then in due course, as is its custom in the spring, the river began to rise. It reached the level of its banks, and crept above them; it reached the broad strong bund of Najim's building, and lapped against it. And Najim, mindful of his oath, set a watchman that night upon the bund, telling him that if he slept and any harm befell, he would cut off his right hand.

"The watchman was Mehdi bin Lazim, and till midnight he walked upon the bund, keeping good watch. He saw that it was strong, far higher and broader than it was their custom to build; and as the night was cold, he gave thanks to Allah that his shaikh had builded well, and sat down to rest behind the bund. Thus it chanced that he fell asleep. And while he slept the wind changed, and lashed the swift-flowing river into waves, which beat angrily against the high bund. Now it was newly built, and the earth was still loosely packed, and soon the water found a weak place where a rat had dug her hole.

"At first broke through a thin trickle, like milk from a camel's udder; but Mehdi slept on, and saw it not. When at the first light of dawn his eyes opened, he saw a swift fierce stream pouring through the bund; and he was afraid, for he felt the knife already at his right hand. Hastening to his village, he collected his family and his household goods, and crossing the river took shelter with Shaikh Tahir, Najim's enemy.

"The sun had been up an hour before the news reached Shaikh Najim; and he cursed Mehdi and all his forebears, and sent messengers to bring him in. At the same time he sent others to call in all his tribesmen, with their women-folk and their beasts of burden. But Najim, with his brothers and all the men of his 'nizil,' went quickly to the place, and found my sister's husband gazing at the breach, while his women cast earth upon their heads and beat their breasts.

[1] Brushwood of camel-thorn, tamarisk, &c.

"'O protected of Allah,' said Abdulla, 'is this the fulfilment of thine oath?'

"'I will pluck out the eyes of Mehdi, who has thus betrayed me!' said Naijm (and thou knowest, O Hakim, that he is terrible in anger).

"'His eyes, and the eyes of all his family, will not save my crops,' said Abdulla. 'It will take many days to close this breach; and two days and two nights of this'—he pointed to the surging water—'will ruin all.'

"'Thy crops are not yet lost,' answered Najim. 'Am I to swear again the oath I swore, by Allah and by his Prophet and by mine own honour, that the land should be safe? Nay, but now I swear, by the good grain that thou shalt surely reap at harvest, the breach shall be closed before to-morrow's sunset.'

"He sent more messengers, to bring in even the old men and the old women, the young boys and the young girls. And those who were already assembled he divided into parties, the women to cut camel-thorn and tamarisk, and the rough grass that grows beside the river, the men to bring earth; only the strongest men he kept to stem the flow of the water.

"Of these, half stood on one side of the breach and half on the other; and at a word from the shaikh they rushed into the water, turning their backs to the current, each man staying himself on his 'mishah,'[1] which he thrust into the ground before him. Thus they tried to check the rush of the water; but the current was fierce and strong, and the quivering "mishahs" showed how hard the men had to struggle to keep their footing. In the middle, where the stream was swiftest, not a man could stand for more than a moment; one after another was whirled off his feet by the rushing water. At that time, Najim was some thirty years of age, and at the height of his strength, taller and broader than any man there. Throwing off his garments, he seized a 'mishah' and dashed into the water, calling upon his brothers to follow him. In the middle of the breach he stood upright, staying the stream with his back as the others did; thus the chain of men met across the breach, and the rush of water was stayed enough for the other parties to begin hastily to make ring bunds, one close to the breach, the other farther back and stronger, lest the first should break.

"Bundles of the 'ghimir' brought by the women were laid down, and on them earth was heaped. Some dug it as best they might from beneath the water, others farther afield, two working together to fill an aba, which they would then carry by the corners to the bund; more men formed a

[1] Spade with small head and six-foot handle.

line, passing clods of earth from hand to hand.

"Night came; by Allah's mercy the moon was full, and the work went on. The living barrier still held back the flood, men being replaced by fresh men as their strength was exhausted. The women and children still brought their bundles, but more slowly now, as they had to go farther and farther afield from the bund to find 'ghimir.' Then came three camels of the shaikh, bearing dates for the hungry labourers; no halt was called, but they ate in hasty mouthfuls, while still striving against their untiring enemy. For the wind blew still hard from the north, and the strength of the river seemed rather to increase than to lessen.

"All night the work went on. At dawn came a long string of camels and cows, bearing bundles of barley, freshly cut during the night from the shaikh's own crops.

"'Rather would I lose the whole of my barley crop,' said Najim, 'than see my word broken.'

"By noon the two ring bunds were finished. The weary men from the water, their faces grey with fatigue, the men worn out with digging earth and carrying, threw themselves down where they were, and slept. The women also, withdrawing a little way apart, slept the deep sleep of exhaustion."

Haji Mohammed sank back, the tension of his body relaxed, as if the fatigue of that day were with him still. There was silence a moment before he continued his tale.

"Only Shaikh Najim and Abdulla slept not.

"'Behold,' said Najim, as he looked at the work which at one time had seemed beyond human compassing, 'behold the promise of thy shaikh.'

"They stood for a few moments in silence. Then suddenly, with no warning, part of the first ring bund crumbled and gave way, letting in a torrent of the angry pent-up water to beat against the second bund.

"Speechless with anxiety the two men watched. Would it stand the strain? It held—it held,—no, a thin trickle of water was forcing its way through, eating out a channel. It grew wider — so wide — wider.

"With a shout the shaikh rushed to the weak point, calling to the sleeping men for help. But they were deep in slumber, and his voice was hoarse with his continual shouted encouragement of the day before.

"The water began to pour through. In two minutes it would be beyond control. What, then, of his sacred oath?

"Najim turned to the motionless figures beside the bund. With his giant strength he seized two sleeping men, thrust them into the widening breach, and held them down. Abdulla had awakened some of his tribesmen, and, stupid with

sleep, they obeyed the shaikh's command, and piled earth, and still more earth, on the living bodies.

"Thus was the breach closed, and the waters came not to the land of Khazainah, and the honour of Shaikh Najim was saved."

With a dramatic gesture, Haji Mohammed ended his tale.

"What happened to Najim when this became known?" asked the Political Officer.

"Hakim, it took place before the coming of the English," said the old man simply.

The Political Officer's decision on his own case given, and his farewells said, Haji Mohammed departed, making his way backwards to the door, where he slipped on the sandals he had left on entering.

The Political Officer turned to the telephone, and rang up the Irrigation Department.

"That you, Stevens? What about this breach at Al Juzra?"

"Oh, we have decided to give it up," came the answer. "With a flood like this, repairing the bund would cost more than the value of the crops it protects."

"Is there any objection to old Shaikh Najim's having a try?"

"None whatever; but I bet he doesn't succeed. What material has he got?"

"Human bodies."

"What?"

"I mean to say, he will find his own material," amended the Political Officer.

"Right-o, let him have a shot; but I don't think he will succeed."

. . . . . .

A week later Shaikh Najim entered the Political Office, but with a stately manner which contrasted oddly with his last appearance there. His tall figure was arrayed in a rich blue silk "zabun," patterned with gold thread, and reaching to his ankles. Above it was a heavily-embroidered scarlet coat, and over all he wore a fine cream-coloured aba, while heavy silver rings set with turquoise adorned his hands.

With much dignity he offered the prescribed greetings; then, with a smile of triumphant satisfaction, came to the point of his visit.

"Sahib," he said, "the breach is closed."

THE CAMEL THIEVES.

"I, and I alone, stole the camels, and sold them to strangers; and I have spent the price I gained for them. If any one denies this, he is a liar. As for that"—the speaker pointed to a much-soiled paper on the office table,—"it is a trick on the part of this townsman."

The Political Officer glanced at the man he was trying. He saw a young Arab, considerably below the usual stature

of a tribesman, but strongly built and muscular, with broad powerful hands and feet. His face, still smooth and beardless, wore an expression of mingled bewilderment and defiance, which gave him rather the appearance of an angry child.

His accuser was a man of very different type—a townsman every inch of him, narrow-chested, sallow, and unhealthy-looking, not over clean, and afflicted, like most of his class, with ophthalmia.

"Only through the help of your Excellency and Allah," he now said smoothly, "can I obtain my rights."

The case was a little unusual. Rashid bin Thigub, the petitioner, had lost two camels, and had learned on inquiry that a certain Hattab and his two sons, reputed thieves, had been seen in the neighbourhood at the time. Thereupon, according to custom, Rashid had set out on a journey among the tribes, in the hope of learning the whereabouts of these men. Eventually he had come up with one of the sons—Ziarah, the young man now on trial.

According to Rashid, it appeared that on Ziarah's denial of all knowledge of the theft, the townsman had claimed his right of insisting that the suspected man should accompany him to Kerbala, there to swear on the tomb of Abbas that he was innocent. To this Ziarah had assented, but on the way had thought better of it, and agreed to seal a statement in writing, to the effect that he, his father and brother, had stolen the camels. This confession, sealed by sixteen witnesses, and for safety's sake countersigned by the Assistant Political Officer of a neighbouring town, was now on the office table.

Yet here was Ziarah stoutly denying that his father or brother had anything to do with the theft, affirming passionately that the document was a trick, and that he alone was the thief. And as there seemed to be more in the matter than met the eye, the case was adjourned for four days for further inquiry.

Three days later, as the Political Officer left his bungalow for his morning ride, a figure squatting in the shadow of the doorway rose, and, after a moment's hesitation, came forward. It was an elderly man, clad only in a coarse brown "bisht," and on his head a black "kafiah" held in place by the twisted "agal," relic of the days when the Bedouin of the desert tied around his head the rope with which he tethered his camel. The man was tall and strongly built; his broad brown feet, the toes wide apart, and the heels cracked and roughened by the hot soil, had never known shoe or sandal. Above the short grey beard and hooked nose were deep-set piercing eyes, shaded from the fierce glare of the desert sun by heavy, over-hanging brows.

"I kiss thy hand, Sahib," he said.

"Who are you?"

"I am Hattab, father of Ziarah, whom thou hast imprisoned," said the man. "Hakim," he went on rapidly, "it was I who stole the camels, the two camels of Rashid. I will return them to him now, and over and above this I will give him two more full-grown camels, if thine honour will but release my son from the jail."

It was not often that the Political Officer had to deal with a case in which two men eagerly affirmed each his own guilt and the innocence of the other.

"But Ziarah has confessed to the theft," he said.

"Nay, nay, he is very small and full of ignorance," said Hattab. "I admit that he was with me when I stole the camels; but are the children to be held responsible for the father's sins? Ah, Sahib, I kiss thy feet," he went on, suiting the action to the words. "We are the people of the desert, we die if we stay within walls. Of thy mercy, spare my son this death."

The Political Officer told him to report at his office at midday on the morrow, and went off for his ride. On his return he was met by Rashid, odiously gleeful.

"Sahib, with my own eyes I have seen another of the thieves in the town; he is the father of Ziarah. I pray thee to send one of the police with me that he may be arrested."

But "I will see you at my office at midday to-morrow" was all the encouragement he got.

. . . . . .

At the appointed time Hattab presented himself at the office. Rashid had been hovering outside for an hour past. A few moments later the prisoner was brought in by his police escort, and at the unexpected sight of his father Ziarah started, and hung his head shamefacedly.

But Hattab ran forward, and eagerly embraced the young man, kissing him on both cheeks.

"See how young and small is my son," he said, turning to the Political Officer.

"Thy son no longer," said Ziarah, "since my treachery has brought thee also here a prisoner."

"A prisoner — treachery!" replied Hattab, puzzled. "Nay, I came hither of my own free will."

There was silence while Ziarah's slow brain tried to grasp this fact.

"I do not understand, my father," he said at last in a bewildered tone.

"Speak; be not afraid," said Hattab encouragingly. "Tell all, for the Government is just and merciful."

But Ziarah was neither fluent nor coherent, and it was only after many questions put to him, as well as to his father and to the townsman Rashid, that the Political Officer at

length got to the bottom of the affair.

Ziarah was driving five donkeys to the village of his kinsman Bandar, where he hoped to sell them, when he was met by Rashid, who taxed him with the theft of his two camels. On his denial the townsman claimed his right to take Ziarah to swear to his innocence on the tomb of Abbas. To refuse this oath is, of course, tantamount to a confession of guilt, and Ziarah was forced to agree, hoping, however, to escape from his accuser's clutches before the journey could be begun. But Rashid was too clever for him. He arranged that Bandar should stand security for his young cousin, and also that the five donkeys should be left in his charge until their return. Reluctantly Ziarah set out on the long journey to Karbala.

As they travelled, the wily townsman took care to play on the fears of his companion. Ziarah, desert-bred and ignorant of the world, had already a firm belief in the powers of Abbas, and Rashid's tales of the dreadful vengeance which the "Father of the Hot Head" had been known to exact convinced the young man that he would never have the courage to swear a false oath on the grave of the Avenger. He sought desperately for a means of saving his skin; and finally, a private grievance over which he had been brooding for some time past suggested a way out.

Ziarah, his father, and his brother Mahmud had all had a hand in the affair of the camels. But now the young man was on bad terms with Mahmud, and full of resentful feelings towards Hattab; for the latter, disregarding all established tribal custom, had bought a wife for his younger son, while Ziarah as yet had none. Why had his father refused to buy a woman for him, the elder? Ziarah brooded darkly over his wrong, forgetting his undeveloped mind and his meagre stature, as compared with that of his tall, upstanding, younger brother.

At the end of two days' travelling together, Rashid knew all the family history of the simple young man, and did not neglect his opportunity. Ziarah had only to seal a paper to the effect that his father and brother had stolen the camels, and he could straightway turn back, reclaim his donkeys, and return to the desert a free man. By the end of the third day Ziarah had agreed, and the two retraced their steps.

Rashid now suggested that they should make for the little town of Nasaidah, where they would find a mullah to draw up the document. But Ziarah absolutely refused.

"By Allah and thy head, I will not go," he said. "Never yet have I entered any walled town, nor will I while I live."

Once more the guile of Rashid was more than a match for Ziarah. Had not the young

man told him that he wished to take a wife? Rashid, then, in gratitude for his help in the recovery of the camels, and because of the friendship which had sprung up between them, would give him his own sister for wife; and he would, so great was the affection which he felt towards his fellow-traveller, require no price—well, next to none—only the five donkeys left as security with the headman Bandar.

Ziarah wavered. To be independent of his father, to flaunt a wife before his brother's eyes, this did indeed seem a tempting prospect.

Rashid followed up his advantage.

"She is fair and comely to look upon. Her hair is dark and glossy, her face like the moon at full, her hands delicately tinted with henna. Soft as those of a gazelle are her eyes, and her body is tall and slender like the palm-tree swaying in the wind from the desert, while her fragrance is like the fragrance of a melon-blossom."

"But surely," objected Ziarah, "the daughter of so much beauty is already wedded, or at least betrothed?"

"She is as yet young," lied Rashid glibly, "but she has had many suitors, and was indeed betrothed; but (may Allah show him mercy) he died." The only sister of Rashid was fat and wrinkled, ophthalmic like himself, and shrewish of tongue; but what of that, since Ziarah would never see her?

The young tribesman, unable to resist the prospect of possessing so much loveliness, agreed to enter the town. Blindly following his guide through the dirty airless streets, he was led into the narrow bazaar, where a mullah, sitting cross-legged beside a shoemaker's shop, was found to write at Rashid's dictation. Ziarah, having taken the plunge, did not care what they wrote. Soon he would be away from this stuffy little town, in the free air of the desert—but not alone. No, his lovely bride would be by his side; he would look deep into eyes softer than those of a gazelle; he would gaze at a face more beautiful than the moon at full. . . .

His day-dream was rudely interrupted by the harsh voice of Rashid, bidding him affix his thumb-impression to the paper, over which the mullah had just finished shaking fine sand. Still blindly, Ziarah obeyed. He could not have read the paper if he would, and it did not occur to his simple mind to ask to have it read over to him. So the fact that he was sealing a confession to the effect that not only his father and brother, but he himself with them, had been the camel-thieves, was lost on him; for Rashid believed that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush.

Rashid called for witnesses, and easily obtained a number of seals to the document. Antipathy between townsman and tribesman is always smoulder-

ing, and Rashid had no difficulty in inducing a sufficient number of the passers-by, "urban, squat, and packed with guile," to produce their seals when a tribesman seemed likely to get into trouble.

Ziarah was hurried out of the bazaar—down more of these sunny stifling streets,—then a long wait outside a house. He hardly saw the sauntering townspeople, nor the naked children playing in the dust near by, for once more the day-dream held him. He had seen the swaying palm in the oasis of the desert; but he had never known the fragrance of the melon-flower. Would the scent be as good, he wondered, as that of burning "arta" wood of the desert?

Once more Ziarah had a rude awakening. Two policemen suddenly appeared from the building behind him. He was hustled into the town jail. Too late he realised that he had been trapped by the hated townsman.

In the solitude of his cell wiser reflections came to Ziarah. His dream shattered, he realised the treachery of which he had been guilty, and in his remorse generously resolved to take the whole blame for the theft on his own shoulders. He would say he had sold the camels, and spent the money. Then no one would attempt to take the prize away from his father, and—there was much solace in this thought—the hateful Rashid would not be able to get his camels back. So ran Ziarah's simple reasoning; but the unexpected appearance of his father, also claiming the whole guilt of the theft, had upset his plans, and thrown him once more into a state of bewilderment.

"Have you the two camels with you now?" asked the Political Officer of old Hattab.

"Aye, the selfsame two. One, a she-camel, has a star on her forehead, as clear as the stars on the darkest night; the other has a blaze near the same place, but not distinctly marked."

The Political Officer's pencil drummed on the table. The camel with a clearly-defined star on her forehead seemed somehow familiar.

"And not only these," continued Hattab, "but two others of my own will I give to Rashid, that my son may be released."

"I accept—I accept," cried Rashid, overjoyed at the prospect of becoming the owner of not two but four camels. "Where are my——"

"Silence!" snapped the Political Officer. He was still thinking of the mark like a star.

"Rashid," he asked, "how much did you pay for these camels?"

The question was sudden and unexpected, and the townsman was taken off his guard.

"Eighteen liras," he replied; and then, seeing his error, quickly corrected himself. "I mean forty liras—yes, forty, Sahib."

Again the Political Officer's pencil drummed on the table.

He touched his bell, and told the farrash, who entered in response to the summons, to send in the head clerk.

"Ahmed Shah," he said to his babu, "I want you to go through last year's petitions — somewhere about May, — a case of two camels reported stolen. I forget the owner's name, but I think he was of the Matafah tribe."

There was a long silence, unbroken until the babu entered with the required paper.

The petitioner, one Hassan bin Nasir, living in a neighbouring Division, stated that two camels had been stolen from him: one, a she-camel with the clear mark of a star on her forehead; the other with similar but fainter marking. The animals had been traced as far as this Division, and the petitioner craved the mercy and kindness of the Hakim to recover them for him.

"Listen," said the Political Officer to Hattab, "the camels which you stole from Rashid are the property of Hassan, the son of Nasir. Your son Ziarah will remain in prison until you produce them, and in addition you must pay to Government the price of a third camel, for stealing is forbidden. This is a light fine; but under the circumstances, and because this is the first time you have been before me, I make it no heavier. Next time, however, the punishment will not be a fine, but imprisonment.

"As for you, Rashid, if I had time to spare on you I should investigate how it came about that you only gave eighteen liras for two camels worth at least forty."

Hattab, kissing the Political Officer's hand, and promising to produce the camels within seven days, left the office. His son went out with his police escort, and only Rashid remained.

"Sahib," he cried, throwing out his hands, while large tears rolled down his cheeks, "what of my eighteen liras?"

"Get out!" said the Political Officer.

MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD.

THE PLEA OF THE INCOMPETENT MINISTER—IRISHMEN KILLING IRISHMEN — THE POLICY OF CLASS HATRED — MR GRANVILLE-BARKER'S EXEMPLARY THEATRE — "PERPETUAL PUBLIC MEETINGS"—THE WHITEWASHING OF THE UNIVERSITIES.

MR WINSTON CHURCHILL, regarding politics as a stage-play, with himself cast for the *beau rôle*, has never lost the boyish habit of dressing-up. We can see him attitudinising as Napoleon, and showing us how well the imperial diadem would sit upon his lofty brow. And when he is tired of the Corsican, he loves best to pose as the Younger Pitt, the bitterest foe whom Napoleon encountered in his triumphal march through a conquered Europe to an emperor's throne. At present Mr Churchill seems to prefer to model himself and his rhetoric upon Pitt. "I used the word stability when I spoke in London some time ago," said he not long since at Dundee, "and I think it is the keynote which should be sounded now. Stability is needed at home as it is needed abroad." Assuredly stability is needed at this hour, but Mr Churchill is not the politician to give it us. When he used the word "stability" both at Dundee and in London —listen to the impressive repetition!—he was thinking, no doubt, of the watchword which Pitt threw across the House at Tierney. "He defies me to state in one sentence what is the object of the war," said Pitt of Tierney. "I do not know whether I can do it in one sentence; but in one word I can tell him that it is *security*." The "security" of Pitt has now become the "stability" of Mr Churchill. And the two "keynotes" or "watchwords" have nothing in common, save their length. Mr Pitt proposed to achieve security by defending the Empire, by resisting the danger, as he did resist it, by fighting England's enemies wherever he found them. Mr Churchill seems to believe that he will arrive at stability by a settled policy of surrender. A foolish hope, which always must be baffled in the end. There is no stability in a truce made with murderers. In the East as in the West, the closest allies of our Coalition are blood-stained assassins. And Mr Churchill, the warm admirer of Michael Collins, the colleague of those who love Lenin, dares to speak of "stability"!

How would he arrive at the "stability" which he pretends is the goal of his desire? By claiming a universal support for himself and his friends—a claim which makes it clear that he is praying for the stability not of Great Britain, but of the Coalition. "I confess to a feeling of deep-seated

indignation," says he, "against men whose only share in these five difficult years has been carping criticism." He need have no fear. It is no carping criticism which assails him, and has assailed him and his friends for many months. He is listening to the honest utterance of those who refuse to aid in the destruction of an Empire which the courage and self-sacrifice of their fathers have built up, of those who would be false to their duty if they did not protest against the levity of Messrs Lloyd George and Churchill. Mr Churchill's plea, in truth, is the invariable plea of the incompetent Minister. The Government, which cannot and dare not govern, still demands a universal support. So might the burglar, caught red-handed, swear that all will be well if only the policeman will buckle him to his heart in the bonds of friendship. The politician who sees his country being ruined by a gang of placemen is false to his trust if he do not do his best to bring the gang of placemen to discredit. How different would the history of England have been if the elder Pitt had refrained from what Mr Churchill would call "carping criticism," and had left Great Britain to the fate which the ambition and egoism of Newcastle had prepared for her. Fortunately, he knew better than to listen to Newcastle's false appeal. "If I see a child," said he, "driving a go-cart close to the edge of a precipice, with the precious freight of a king and his family, I am bound to take the reins out of such hands." He took the reins out of Newcastle's hands, and saved England.

The situation to-day resembles very closely the situation of 1757. "The maxims of our Government have degenerated," said Pitt, "not our natives. I wish to see that breed restored which under our old principles carried our glory so high." Restored it was, but only by the inspiration and example of William Pitt. It was the strength of that great Minister to distinguish between what mattered and what was merely irrelevant. "To times of relaxation," said he, and we may still echo this simple truth, "should be left that fondness for disposal of places; wisdom should meet such rough times as these." Our present governors are supremely interested in the frivolities of politics. They are as fond as ever Newcastle was of the disposal of places. Whatever happens they can find work for idle hands to do. They lack, one and all, the wisdom which should meet the rough times ahead of us.

In other words, we are beset by Newcastles on every side, who still assert that they are beyond and above criticism. And though we have no Pitt among us, we have in the Die-hards a body of men who are quite competent to put our Newcastles to rout. They are not clever men, and that is so much the better. We are tired of clever men. Mr Lloyd George, we are told, is a

clever man, and so, we hear, is Mr Churchill. They know all the tricks of the trade, we are assured, and if that be true, the less we hear about the trade of politics the better we shall be pleased. What we want to-day is the plain policy of honest men, who are not afraid to say what they think, and who are not capable of going back on their word. We have been deceived too often by demagogues, who, pledged to one opinion, have readily renounced it at the bidding of a leader or at the promise of votes; by demagogues who, having broken the union, still impudently declare that they belong to the Unionist Party. We ask their collaboration no longer. We ask a few honourable men to come to our aid, and we shall not fail in the fight against the Newcastles of the hour.

If Mr Churchill's sense of humour were acuter he would not appeal to the pity of his opponents. He has done nothing that he should be saved from the attacks of his critics. Had he devoted his days and his nights to the simple-hearted service of the country he might have a right to complain of rough usage. He and his friends have kept their eyes sternly fixed on the ballot-box; they have gambled away our security for votes. Let us cast our eyes back over the last few months, and remember the progress of the so-called Irish "treaty." We do not know whether Mr Lloyd George and his fellow-conspirators against the Union sincerely believed that their Irish gamble would come off. We cannot forget how they held themselves when they pretended that they had reached a settlement. They did not wait for the praise of others. They beslavered themselves with adulation. There was neither dignity nor reasonableness in their bearing. They behaved as men who, to use their own hideous jargon, were "out for a stunt." They did not look upon their work with the humility of wise men contemplating the end of a great enterprise. They made the agreement the excuse of violent, noisy, vulgar propaganda. Thus they showed themselves in their true colours as men who wanted nothing more than an election cry with which to split the ears of a credulous people. Peace with Ireland, where no peace was possible, seemed to their sanguine minds almost as useful as the Chinese pigtail. And Mr Churchill asks us for our aid and confidence!

Yet Mr Churchill, after all the bouquets and telegrams and photographs, is not happy. He admits that possibly things will get worse before they get better. A pretty outlook, indeed! "It is possible," he says, "that Irishmen will kill and murder each other and destroy Irish property and cripple Irish prosperity for some time before they realise that they, and they alone—and it is their country—will have to pay the bill in life and treasure. It is Irish blood that will be

spilt; Irish money that will be lost; and the Irish character that will be stained." You must be a politician to be callous enough to talk like that. The Irish, thinks Mr Churchill, can throw the blame on us no longer. Thus would he evade the responsibility of misgovernment, or rather of no government at all. The evasion is not so simple as it seems. Responsibility cannot be thrown aside because its burden no longer presses upon the English back. The past and its misdeeds still hang about the necks of our demagogues, who for popularity refused to rule Ireland, and now leave her to the fate which they prepared for her. It is Irishmen, says Mr Churchill, who will kill and murder each other. And suppose among the Irish killed and murdered there are some who were rash enough to serve the Government, of which Mr Churchill is a member. Will they be dismissed as merely Irishmen and go unavenged? We have seen members of the R.I.C., a loyal and efficient force, murdered when they returned to their homes, after keeping the peace for England. Some of them were foully butchered as they lay sick and helpless in hospital. Is it still their own fault and not ours that they are sent thus brutally out of life? Can the blame of their deaths be thrown upon us no longer? We would hold the present Government severally and collectively guilty of every murder that is committed upon the R.I.C. and of the loyalists of Southern Ireland, and Mr Churchill cannot get rid of his proper burden by the use of a phrase.

And there is something more which our governors forget. They inherited — in 1906 — a peaceful and a prosperous Ireland. To suit their own policy they deliberately let the country get out of hand. So long as they had an independent majority they were not Home Rulers —not they. When the Irish vote seemed of value to them they were ready to go as far as they were bidden. The Irish rebellion of 1916 gave them and the Irish the opportunity of lawlessness and treachery, which neither party lost. The rebels were flattered and better fed than their guards. What wonder was it that they realised at once the profit of rebellion and the usefulness of the gun? From that moment—when murderers were pampered and went unpunished—the doom of Ireland was certain. The Sinn Feiners, seeing all government taken away from them, recognised that the English stood in fear of their guns and revolvers. If any doubt where the responsibility of the Easter rebellion and the subsequent butcheries lies, let them read the blue-book, published after the lamentable events of 1916, and they will doubt no longer. Had a firm policy been followed before and after the fatal Easter, Ireland would not now be in the midst of civil war. But Mr Churchill's conscience is clear. He feels the weight of no responsibility. "They cannot throw blame on us any longer."

Now that Ireland has failed to bring it all the fame and glory it expected to gather there, the Coalition has fallen back upon a bogey of its own invention. Socialism is now the enemy, and we must keep the Coalition in power that we may fight it. Even were the bogey anything stronger than sticks and rags, it would be wicked to set it up in the public eye. To take it seriously, to trot it out in pompous speeches, is the most mischievous thing that a mischievous Minister can do. For it is a direct appeal to class hatred. Now, in appealing to class hatred Mr Churchill is an adept. Time was when he and Mr Lloyd George travelled up and down the country displaying another bogey of their own devising, which they called "the dukes." The bogey bore no resemblance to anything in life or nature. But it served to make bad blood between the lower and higher classes, and it was worth to its inventors many pocketfuls of votes. And now, for purposes of their own, Messrs Lloyd George and Churchill have deposed the old bogey, and set up one more dangerous in its place. For good or evil—we think for evil—a Franchise Bill was thrust upon us in the middle of the war, a Bill which nobody wanted. As the Bill was passed, it is our business to make the best of it, and we shall not make the best of it if for selfish reasons we pretend that the working classes are purely Bolshevist at heart, and a public danger to the State. The events of the last four years have proved that our salvation lies in the restoration of party government. Mr Churchill and his friends would substitute for party government the worst of all systems — government by class. To set man against man for the mere reason that one works with his hands, the other with his head, is to banish goodwill and comradeship for ever from the country. We want to divide the voters perpendicularly into left and right, not horizontally into upper and lower. There are sound Tories among the working classes who have a firm faith in the great traditions of the Empire, and who would not willingly destroy the United Kingdom. We would rather have these men on our side than a whole wilderness of "Liberal Coalitionists." If we are to begin a fight between the Haves and the Have-nots, then we shall come very near to revolution, and Great Britain, so far from being a land for heroes to live in, will not be fit for beasts to live in. Yet Mr Churchill put up the bogey of Socialism at the very moment when Mr Lloyd George, apparently with Mr Churchill's approval, went to Genoa that he might gratify the ambition, cherished ever since the failure of Prinkipo, of shaking the Bolshevists, as he had shaken Michael Collins, by the hand!

What is the matter with the theatre? On every side we hear that it is sick unto death. There is no disease from which it does not suffer. Now it is

afflicted by that terrible complaint — the lack of money, especially if it attempt artistic tasks which are beyond its strength. Now if a diet of gold cure its worst sickness, the medicine has so bad an effect upon its brain that it becomes imbecile. What is to be done with it? None of the quacks who gather at its bedside have succeeded in bringing it to a better state of mind or body. And we are not sure whether that highly-efficient doctor, Mr Granville-Barker, in 'The Exemplary Theatre,' has anything more useful to prescribe than his humbler colleagues.

The mere success of the theatre stands in its way. At the very moment when foreigners profess to find nothing more than a kind of childishness in our modern drama, Mr Barker deplores the prosperity which stands in the way of its reform. "The chief difficulty," he writes, "of doing anything for the theatre of to-day is that it is so confoundedly prosperous, if we judge it . . . as it is popular to do, as it asks us to judge . . . only by its successes. The weakness of personal vanity and the hunger for passing praise . . . all about the theatre passes so quickly . . . are played upon, and themselves made to pay. Its duty to be of the age and of the hour is debauched to a mere appetite for the favour of the moment. It sustains itself amid such golden clouds of illusion that one finds it hard, to begin with, to turn the thoughts of the theatre itself to a soberer standard, and even harder to persuade men that something must really be done to save it from this damnation." That is true enough of the theatre; it is also true of every other form of artistic expression. He who lives by the favour of the mob, or who hopes to grow rich by a large circulation, cannot but appeal to the vulgar passions of his patrons. Especially in the theatre is prosperity very often a mark of artistic failure. For the theatre is, as Mallarmé said many years ago, "the scene of pleasures taken in common"; and the pleasures taken in common are necessarily not of the highest. A book may discover its readers one by one. You must share the performance of a play with the fortuitous crowd which happens to jostle you on this or that night. By what road of compromise, then, shall we arrive at wiser audiences or a reformed theatre?

Mr Barker is a sanguine man, and he seems to believe that something may be done by taking thought. He would have the theatre converted into a branch of national education. What blessed simplicity! The enterprise upon which "the nation," as represented by its Government, puts its hand, withers up and dies. Especially is the nation, or the Government, incapable of teaching anything or anybody. To impart the rudiments even is a task far beyond its powers. It would be the direct and immediate

ruin of the theatre were its champions to approach the department of education. There would be forms to fill up, and codes, and payments by results, and imbecility and chicanery in every shape and form. If the Government paid the piper, assuredly the Government would call the tune. We should see official playwrights, advanced by ministers and chosen by wire-pullers. The time might come when candidates for Parliament would be heckled on their theatrical policy, and would put into their election addresses a profession of faith in Mr Shaw or in the concocter of the last *revue*. One thing is certain, that in the common strife of politics, which tends to become more confused and corrupt day by day, the interests of the drama would be utterly forgotten, and that what was once a beautiful art, and will be a beautiful art again when the popular taste is purified, would sink into the pit of officialism, and become the close companion of blue-books.

Whatever happens to the theatre, we hope that it will be spared the unhappy fate of State aid and State patronage. No sooner do the arts fall under the sway of the Government than they become an expression of the Government's indifference. The one institution which hitherto has survived the touch of the dead hand—the *Comédie Française*—may not be taken as an example to the world. It embodies in itself an honoured and honourable tradition. It is the House of Molière. The actors and actresses who have come during the last three centuries under its sheltering roof inherited an art and a method which had not grown stale by custom, nor faded by forgetfulness. You saw until lately at the *Comédie Française* the masterpieces of Molière still played as they were played in his time. The actors regarded themselves as the trustees of an ancient tradition. It was their task and privilege to hand on the torch which they had received from their predecessors to those who followed them. It was a lofty duty loftily accomplished—accomplished with the greater dignity because the actors of the *Comédie Française* were at the outset the servants of the King. They bowed the knee not to any vague expression of the people's will. They were not asked to embody in their art the desires of a sacred majority. Their high office was not besmirched by foolish talk of the people; and when the great theatre of France fell into the hands of a democracy, its art and its method were already firmly established.

And now at last this, the ancient stronghold of theatrical art, is losing something of its prestige, is proving faithless to its trust. Popular Governments like to see a quick return for their money, and are inclined, if the return tarry, to talk about stale conventions and the march of mind. And when mind begins to march it is a bad look-out for

theatrical or any other art. There is already a loosening of the bands which held the *Comédie Française* to the past. In old days the presence of M. de Max at the House of Molière would have been an impossibility, but he draws large houses, and justifies himself in the eyes of the Government. However, in its best days or in its worst, the *Comédie Française* is no guide to us. We cannot have a national theatre, because we have no national tradition to build it about. We have made and destroyed many a tradition, which mere fact proves the impermanence of our methods and ideals. It is our habit to go as we please, and were we by the aid of our Government to establish a national theatre, it would be used either as a place of Radical, Socialist, even Bolshevist propaganda, or it would remain damp, chilled, and empty.

Mr Barker, however, is not dismayed. He believes that an exemplary theatre might be established, in which the elements of dramatic art could be taught and learned. And were such a theatre possible, we should welcome Mr Barker as its beneficent autocrat. He is a highly accomplished manager. In the art of setting plays upon the stage he has no rival. He is all for calm and simplicity. He has taught the actor the most difficult lesson of all—how to stand still upon the stage. Unfortunately he cannot exclude politics from his contemplation of the playhouses. In his mind the two incompatibles—art and the pulpit—are inextricably mixed up. Is he to be a master of the revels or a revivalist preacher? Which is to hold sway in his mind—radicalism or the drama? We find glimmerings in him of a better wisdom. "Before God, before the law, in the eye of the bus-conductor," he asks on one page of his book, "will the doctrine that all men are equal satisfactorily expatiate much further?" And then, on another page, he falls feet foremost into the slough of demagogic commonplace.

He is at heart in love with propaganda. At any rate, in his desire to see established a national theatre, he is willing to call the politicians to his aid, and appears not to understand that at the mere touch of their hands the drama would wither and shrink up. "Does it never occur to statesmen," he writes, "in the intervals of their talk of the bonds of Empire, that in a national theatre they could have a perpetual public meeting, so to speak, where the knot of a racial fellowship in apprehension and understanding might be tied with a better, because a less obtrusive, eloquence?" An alluring prospect, isn't it? What a lofty ideal for the art of the theatre to aim at—a perpetual public meeting! Now a public meeting suggests a stuffy atmosphere, bald heads, and fading afternoon light. Those who address such meetings are intent only to do somebody else "good"—they are

already as "good" as possible in their own eyes. And in the very act of doing "good" they easily achieve boredom. The truth is that Mr Barker, admirable craftsman though he is, has been corrupted by Mr Shaw, that sad victim of suburban debating societies, who might have spent a happy life in the composition of farces, and has been driven to take a wrong turning by half-baked philosophers and blind-eyed politicians. So Mr Barker, when he might be devising in the theatre a place of pleasant resort, befogs himself with the horrible thought of "perpetual public meetings," and points out, involuntarily, the deadly influence which the "nation" or the "State"—call it what you will—must always exercise upon the arts.

And at the head of this conspiracy to provoke "perpetual public meetings," Mr Barker would establish a council. That is a matter of course; and here again he proves his political bias. No sooner do you contrive councils and committees, green-baize-covered tables and wads of blotting-paper, than you drive the arts out of the window. You talk and come to no conclusion. Mr Barker perceives the danger, though he is not deterred from his vain enterprise. "In too many such councils," he owns, "is found the weight, if not of the dead, of the dying hand . . . In the control of a theatre, which must renew its life day by day, to give even the power of responsible criticism to minds that must more naturally judge the present by self-defensive memories than see it as preparation for a future which they themselves will not see might have a very deadening effect. Why should we not find in our council—along with government or municipal representatives and nominees of the vested interests of the older generation—the younger people voicing there their insurgency and discontent?" In other words, Mr Barker, having got his council, would refuse to trust it, and in order to convert it into a real political assembly, jargon and all, would introduce into it a compact band of radicals, warranted to make it harmless and inactive by the common methods of intrigue.

It is a sad prospect—the theatre a mere branch of Parliament or of the County Council; and we cannot but be surprised that Mr Barker, a true man of the theatre, should contemplate it with equanimity. Whatever is to be the future of our stage, it is not to the intervention of Government that we must look for help. If the arts are to be happy and prosperous, they must be left to grow in their own way and at their own pace. The reform of the theatre, if it ever come, must come from itself. Mr Barker would do far more useful work for the drama if he produced plays with a modest simplicity, and forced upon his actors the necessity of restrained gesture and movement and of

natural pose, than if he composed a hundred treatises, in which art and politics are intermixed and confounded. When good dramas are set upon the stage, inexpensively, and interpreted by good actors, the proper education of the audience begins. And with a properly-educated audience all things are possible. It was Kean's marvellous fortune to come at a moment when his great gifts were justly appreciated by his audience, and when his genius was properly panegyrised by Hazlitt, a critic fit for the high occasion. If once we could find a Kean and a Hazlitt and an audience worthy to listen to them, the problem of the theatre would be solved. And the most important task of all is to prepare such an audience. When these things are rightly accomplished we shall have no need to appeal to County Councils or to Governments. Until these things are rightly accomplished, County Councils and Governments will interfere in vain. For a theatre is, or should be, a place of gay resort, where a wise audience should be in close sympathy with well-skilled actors. Above all, it is not, and we hope never will be, the haunt of propaganda-mongers, the home of perpetual public meetings, even though those public meetings are designed for excellent ends and worthy purposes.

When some years ago the Government of the country took upon itself to meddle in the matter of education, Dr Corrie, then the Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, thus expressed the wisely conservative view of the question: "I trust," said he, "the Commissioners will excuse me from stating it to be my opinion that the present chief want of the University is exemption from the disturbing power of Royal or Parliamentary Commissions." That was the chief want of the University then; it is still and always will remain the chief want of the University. The Government will do a vast deal of harm to the older universities if they attempt anything more than to help them with money. That the universities have a claim to State aid is perfectly true, for they have done work for the country which was not provided for in their endowment, and they have done it freely and with great success. All the costs of new studies they have borne cheerfully and without complaint. The sciences, to provide for which they have impoverished themselves, were not dreamt of by their pious founders. The demands upon the funds of the universities and colleges made by the older studies—classics and mathematics—are trifling compared with the exactions of science; and as they have gone beyond their original purpose in meeting these exactions, it is but fair that the country should share the burden which they have borne for the country's sake. But even though this aid is abundantly justified, it is still a

danger. No university would accept it were it not gravely embarrassed for lack of money. The members of the Royal Commission on the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge who are responsible for the Report are fully alive to the risk that is run. This is what they say in a memorable passage: "That the attempt of the State to control opinion in the universities and colleges broke down in 1688, and was never revived, is a great fact that has distinguished our university system from that of France and Germany. It is a precious part of our intellectual and moral heritage. . . . If there were any danger that grants of public money would lead to State interference with opinions in the universities, it might be the less of two evils that they should decline in efficiency rather than lose their independence in order to obtain adequate means."

So says the Commission, and it is well to have the truth plainly stated. But it is a pious opinion, and no more. It gives us no security for the future. A clause in the report of a commission binds nobody, and the danger of democratic interference is not lessened because it is openly admitted. Even in this very modest Report there is a long series of suggestions and recommendations, many of which will be thought unacceptable by those who are responsible for the conduct of the universities. Shall their acceptance be a condition of the grant in aid or not? If it is a condition, what becomes of the precious part of our intellectual and moral heritage? As for the suggestions themselves, they are for the most part small and niggling. The masters and fellows are not fools that they should be given gratuitous and trivial advice. What would the head of any enterprise say if a company of solemn scholars and pompous politicians met together and urged them to reduce their laundry charges or to "develop the system of bed sitting-rooms?" It is not by such means as these that the demands of higher education are to be met, and the kindest thing to say of the Report is that for the most part it is wholly superfluous. It certainly was not worth the £10,000, which sum was the cost of its production.

Discussing one fiercely-debated problem—the position of women at Cambridge—the commission runs into the very danger which it deplores. If the grant of public money depends upon submission to its demands, then it is openly interfering with the opinion of the University. Cambridge has twice refused by large majorities to admit women to the same privileges as are now enjoyed by men. In doing this the University was well within its rights. It exercised that "self-determination" which we are told is the birthright of all communities. Yet the commission designs another destiny for Cambridge, in spite of its lofty profession of no inter-

ference. This is what it recommends: "That Cambridge remain mainly and predominantly a men's University, though of a mixed type, and the number of women graduates be limited by University statute to 500." What the absurd phrase—a men's University of a mixed type—means we don't pretend to know. But we gather that women are to be eligible for all offices, except those of Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, and Proctor, and we do not understand how it can be pretended that this eligibility can exist in a men's University. The question has been discussed for years at Cambridge, which has decided, as it has an obvious right to do, that it will not admit women within its gates, and there should be an end of it. It is a poor business to bribe the University with the promise of so much a year to be untrue to its own faith and its own ideals.

The joint education of men and women is but a half-tried experiment, and prudence suggests that before Cambridge takes to the fashionable road of surrender it should wait to see how Oxford fares. The world is not made better by uniformity, but by variation. There are many Universities in which men and women meet upon equal terms. Cambridge is the one and only University which obeys the purpose of its founders and keeps itself honourably and exclusively apart from women. For this reason it is the duty of Cambridge to resist the impertinent suggestion of the Commission, and to keep its fate resolutely in its own hands.

For the rest, it is not easy to understand why the members of the Commission should have been at the pains to meet and to issue their report. They have found nothing to censure, and the most of their suggestions are, as we have said, merely trivial. Probably they were invited to their irrelevant labours in order to pacify Labour. Labour, we have been told, regards the Universities as mere places of idleness and luxury. It is commonly believed—again it is rumour that speaks—that Oxford and Cambridge are still dominated by Mr Verdant Green and little Mr Bouncer. Now if this foolish belief were abroad, it was hardly worth dispelling. But at least the report must have come as a shock to those foolish persons in and out the ranks of Labour, who were told, and told others, that nothing was learned at Oxford and Cambridge but the dead languages, and very little of them. And now that the farce is over, all that remains is for the State to pay unconditionally the grants which it promises, or to remain true to its openly-expressed opinion that it "might be the less of two evils that the Universities should decline in efficiency rather than lose their independence in order to obtain adequate means."

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